AT THE FEET of the DIVINE MASTER

HUONDER

SECOND SERIES

AT THE FEET OF THE DIVINE MASTER

Short Meditations for Busy Parish Priests

BY
THE REV. ANTHONY HUONDER, S.J.

FREELY ADAPTED INTO ENGLISH

Edited by
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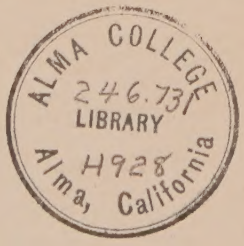
SECOND SERIES
THE NIGHT OF THE PASSION



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THE NIGHT OF THE PASSION

I. INTRODUCTORY MEDITATION

I. CHRIST'S WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER AND THE DREAD OF HIS DISCIPLES

I. The Master's Willingness to Suffer

1. THE Master is willing, nay He desires to suffer: "And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straightened until it be accomplished?" (Luke xii, 50).

Suffering was not forced upon Him. Rather it is part and parcel of His vocation, of His commission; indeed, it is the principal task of His life. Thus it was that from the beginning, suffering remained before Him as the great objective towards which His eyes were constantly directed.

And now that the hour approaches, He does not tarry, but, keeping His face "steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem" (Luke ix, 51), enters upon His dolorous Passion.

At the farewell feast, the words which announced the beginning of the Passion, rang clear and true: "But that the world may know, that I love the Father: and as

the Father hath given me commandment, so do I: Arise, let us go hence." (John xiv, 31).

2. *This willingness to suffer is a characteristic trait of all true friends of Christ:* of the Apostles, once they have learned to know the mystery of the Cross; of St. Paul, who desired to glory in nothing but the Cross; of St. Ignatius of Antioch, and of that great army of heroes and heroines of the age of martyrs; of St. Francis of Assisi, of St. Ignatius Loyola, of St. John of the Cross ("Lord that I may suffer and be condemned with you!"), and many others.

Christ presents Himself to us, consumed by a veritable passion for suffering, in the remarkable flowers of Catholic mysticism, a Catherine of Siena, a Magdalen of Pazzi (*"aut pati, aut mori"*), a Teresa of Jesus, a Catherine Emmerick, and so forth.

This willingness to suffer is the distinguishing characteristic of the Saints; for holiness spells heroic Christian virtue, but heroism without suffering and a passion for suffering is unthinkable.

3. *The Passion for Suffering and the Priesthood.* Wrapped up in the idea of the Catholic priesthood are the notions of suffering and sacrifice, and consequently, a readiness to suffer.

Hence, education to the priesthood must involve a training of the will to suffer. Woe to the young man who enters the priesthood without the will to suffer! who is attracted solely by the prospect of a comfortable, care-free life! He will surely fail, just as the Apostles failed in the dark night of the Passion.

Hence it is so very important that the priest of God,

both in youth and in old age, should frequently meditate upon the Passion of Christ, lovingly and thoughtfully contemplate the wonderful mystery of His voluntary sacrificial death, and thus, before the Wounds of his King, learn to flee from the soft and voluptuous dread of suffering.

II. The Apostles' Aversion to Suffering

1. The Master reveals the mystery of His *divinity* to His Apostles, and, according to the measure of their understanding at that time, they joyfully declare with St. Peter: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."

The Master unveils for them for the first time the wonderful mystery of the Eucharist. Doubts and opposition arise. But in the name of the majority their leader declares: "Thou hast words of eternal life."

The Master lifts the veil from the profound mystery of the Blessed Trinity. They accept it in silent reverence.

2. *But one mystery, that of His suffering and Passion, they cannot understand.* Again and again the Master refers to it, first obscurely in parables, then clearly and distinctly, attempting all the while to reconcile His timid disciples with the thought. He explains His sacrificial death on the Cross as the climax, the crowning of his work, the love of the Cross as an indispensable condition of true discipleship. In vain; they will not, they cannot grasp the idea of a crucified Messias. It is to no avail that the Master constantly re-

minds them that He will rise again on the third day. They are entirely deaf to this prediction; the idea of suffering alone engrosses their attention. "But they understood not this word; and it was hid from them, so that they perceived it not. And they were afraid to ask him concerning this word." (Luke ix, 45).

3. Even Peter, the chosen leader, who generally spoke for the others, took the Master aside and "began to rebuke him, saying: Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee." (Mark viii, 32 sq.: Matthew xvi, 22).

The Master rebukes him sharply in a loud tone of voice so that the other Apostles can hear Him: "Go behind me, Satan." It is the same command that He once gave to the devil when he tried to tempt Him from His Messianic vocation. Whoever would interfere with the plan of suffering, which forms an essential part of the task of the Messias, does the work of Satan.

"Thou savorest not the things that are of God, but that are of men."

Suffering, therefore, is a divine idea, which Peter did not grasp. At once the Master calls the people and the Apostles together and earnestly and solemnly repeats His teaching regarding the Cross. In vain; it remains an unintelligible mystery for them.

4. The poor disciples! We must not judge them too harshly. True, the picture of a suffering Messias had been delineated touchingly by the prophets, but it was completely overshadowed by the dazzling prospect of the future Messianic Kingdom.

It was so easy to be attracted by this picture of

beauty and to interpret the glory of the coming Messias in an earthly sense. Christ indeed strove by word and deed to correct their false idea; but, had not His disciples witnessed His remarkable miracles and the manner in which the people surged about Him and joyfully proclaimed Him King of Israel and Son of David? Had they not beheld him transfigured upon Thabor?

And now he wished to die, die a cruel death, precisely on the spot to which the prophets had assigned His glorification. (Ps. ii, 6; Is. lxii; Zach. viii, 3; ix, 8 sq.; Agg. ii, 8 sq.)

Was this possible? How could these things be made to agree?

The whole plan of the Redemption, with the sacrifice of the Cross as its centre and climax, was so unearthly and divinely great in conception that the Apostles were unable to grasp this tremendous mystery, which was far beyond their range of vision!

5. Can we, as priests of the New Dispensation, reproach the Apostles for their weakness,—we who stand in the light of fulfillment and yet know so little of the mystery of the Cross?

II. PREPARING FOR THE PASSION

No matter what was the attitude of the Apostles towards the great mystery of the Passion, it was absolutely necessary to prepare and fortify them against the hour of suffering.

Since all His prophecies and allusions to His Passion fell upon unreceptive soil, the Good Master evolved a

new plan to arrive at His objective, by choosing an approach which revealed at once His wisdom and His tender love.

He prefaced the tremendous tragedy of His bitter Passion with the incomparable hours of the Last Supper, the memories of which could not be effaced by the events that followed.

This last evening is wholly dedicated to the task of preparing the Apostles for the tragic Night of Agony.

Christ's Farewell Words as a Preparation for The Passion [1]

1. The last words of our Lord are freighted with sympathy and manifest a divine understanding of the weakness of the Apostles. Never before had He spoken to them in this tone.

Above all they are words from the heart, primarily intended to draw the Apostles closer to Him and to tighten the bonds of love between Himself and them. That is the best preparation for the Passion, for "love is stronger than death." (Cant. viii, 6).

2. No longer does He speak openly of suffering and death. He veils the tragic "going away" with the less poignant "I shall return." His departure is a "going to the Father"; it is no escape, but rather the attainment of a goal.

[1] The Last Supper here is considered solely under this aspect, since it does not belong directly to the Passion and deserves a more detailed exposition, which we may present upon another occasion.

Moreover, it does not signify lasting separation, but is to be followed by an early and double joy.

Thus the Master veils the tragic and the bitter with the sweetness and tenderness of friendly promises. Thus the pangs of parting are assuaged by the assurance of His return.

3. Moreover, He no longer mentions, or rather alludes only indirectly, to the Jewish opposition. In its stead He points to the tremendous power that stands behind it, namely, the "Prince of Darkness," and thus lifts the great tragic conflict into a newer and higher sphere. It is the conflict between God and Satan, between Light and Darkness.

4. He emphasizes that His *departure* is *voluntary* and fraught with *advantages* for them. It does not spell defeat in the battle with human wickedness, which is but a tool in the hand of a higher power,—the Heavenly Father.

5. The Messianic idea with its tempting element of earthly greatness disappears in the light of *His relationship to the Father.*

He is returning to the Father, and this return is a great boon for Him, at which they, His disciples, should rejoice with Him, since they love Him and therefore desire His honor and exaltation. This does not consist in the realization of foolish Messianic hopes, but in His going to the Father, entering the kingdom of His glory. It is to their advantage also, for He goes to prepare a habitation for them. He will return to take them with Him, "so that where He is, they also may be."

Hence, it is not an actual parting, but only a separation for a brief period, to be followed by an eternal reunion in Heaven.

6. Nor does He leave them behind as abandoned orphans. No, in His place will come the *Paraclete,* the Consoler, who will remain with them and complete in them the work which He, the Master, has begun.

7. For the first time He introduces them to the depths of the Godhead, the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, the relation in which He and, through Him, they also, stand to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, —and all this in words such as He had never uttered before. Every word betrays unspeakable love and reveals to them, for the first time, how dear they are to Him. "I will not now call you servants. . . . Because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you." (John xv, 15).

He allows them to share His innermost secrets; He reveals to them His place in the Divine Family and thereby creates a new and holy bond of intimate love and communion.

8. He crowns it all with the *institution of the Holy Eucharist,* which solves for them the apparent contradiction of His departure and everlasting presence, and gives them a new proof of His immeasurable love.

Thus they are prepared for the coming Passion. True, they will show themselves faint-hearted in the hour of trial. Faith and hope will waver, but love will preserve them from the worst, and with but one exception, none of them will be lost. (John xvii, 12).

Happy the priest who, in the holy hour of the Last Supper, on the day of his ordination to the priesthood, or of his first Mass, or in some other chosen hour of grace, has become intimately united with his Lord and Master. He may be faint-hearted and cowardly in the hour of suffering; *but the love of the Saviour, deeply anchored in his heart, will preserve him and save him from destruction.*

Love can supply all things, but nothing can take its place. "Love is stronger than death."

II. IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES

III. THE SADNESS OF JESUS

"And [Jesus] began to grow sorrowful and to be sad." (Matthew xxvi, 37).

WHAT is it that weighs so heavily upon the soul of the God-Man in this hour?

1. *It is the sorrow of the Messias over the dreadful blindness and obstinacy of His people!*

They had murdered His prophets, the "servants of God," from Abel to Zachary, and now wished to inflict the same fate on Him, the "Son and Heir." (Cf. the parable of the husbandman, Matthew xxi, 33 sqq.; xxiii, 35.) The sorrow that found utterance in His last warning cry: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" now overwhelms Him with full force. "My soul is sorrowful unto death."

The Church shows a delicate appreciation of these facts when in Holy Week, commemorating His bitter Passion, she echoes the Lamentations of Jeremias and, at the adoration of the Holy Cross, chants the stirring *Improperia* between the Messias and His people, beginning with the words: *"Popule meus, quid feci tibi? aut in quo contristavi te? Responde mihi."* These soul-stirring questions are a faithful echo of the plaints of the suffering Saviour.

2. His sorrow is that of a priestly heart.

What is it that most severely depresses the heart of a priest? It is the futility and barrenness of even the most exhausting labors, the disdainful thanklessness for all love, kindness, and sacrifice; the utter lack of understanding and sympathy from those who stand nearest to him, actual or apparent injustices and slights, etc.

This burden, immeasurably increased, descends with crushing force upon the heart of the eternal High Priest, the "bishop of our souls" (1 Peter ii, 25). All around Him is a black sea of sorrow.

The Past. What had He done for this nation and country? What had He accomplished? A glance at Jerusalem, whose downfall He had weepingly predicted; a glance at Galilee, upon whose cities He had called down, in parting, a terrible woe, give the answer.

The Present. "Consolantem me quaesivi." Who stands by Him consolingly? His holy Mother? No; she is far away and will see Him only on the way to Golgotha. His chosen Disciples? No; they sleep while He suffers.

Yonder in the palace of the High Priest a murderous plan is being hatched out; a mob assembles in the court, among them Judas, the traitor.

The Garden of Olives is filled with strange sounds; the brook Cedron murmurs out of the depths to Him who weeps alone and deserted. *"Non est vir mecum."*

The Future. His vision peers into the future upon the *via dolorosa* which He will travel through the centuries with His Church, His Saints, and His martyrs,

—truly a *via longa* of suffering and persecution! How frequently did not this vision of the future arise before Him? "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John xv, 20).

He beholds this apathy in millions upon millions of men,—sees Himself forgotten, despised, calumniated, betrayed by so many.

He beholds, above all, His Eucharistic Way of the Cross, which leads Him past all the desecrated churches and altars and impious sacrileges,—truly a vision that was bound to fill His soul with unspeakable sorrow.

And in this sad picture of the past, present, and future *priestly forms* cast the darkest shadows. Priests condemn him to death; an Apostle denies Him; a newly consecrated priest betrays Him. Truly, "great as the sea is thy destruction; who shall heal thee?" (Lam. ii, 13).

IV. FEAR AND HORROR

"Coepit pavere." (Mark xiv, 33).

Fear, according to Aristotle (Rhet. 2), is the most humiliating of spiritual sufferings. We do not fear danger and pain when we stand in its midst and every chance for escape has vanished. We resist and develop every ounce of strength we have in us.

Fear is the dread of invisible future evil, accompanied by the depressing consciousness of one's impotence. Hence, fear always has an eye to flight and clings to every glimmer of hope that an avenue of escape may open from the threatening disaster.

Thus it was with our Lord. He looks about Him and sees but one possibility of escape from suffering,—the removal of the chalice by His Father. To this end He cries aloud: "Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee: remove this chalice from me." (Mark xiv, 36). It is fear,—real, gripping, terrorizing fear, that breaks forth in these cries. But what does the Master fear?

I. Fear of Death

1. Death is the bitterest of all human afflictions, and the more painful its form, the greater the fear which it inspires and the more violent the reaction of the soul.

2. The Master well knows what is awaiting Him:—it is death of the most painful and disgraceful sort, preceded and accompanied by tremendous sufferings (scourging, crowning of thorns, etc.) It is a painful death the intensity of which is in direct proportion to the refinement of the life to which it puts an untimely end. The Master was but thirty-three years old and at the beginning of His career. What great things could He not have accomplished in the years to come! But it was not to be. He must forego all these holy ambitions to meet death in the midday of His life.

3. How bitter and painful can such *an early death be for a priest!*

He is still young; a world of accomplishment, a bright and glorious future, await him; a friendly world encompasses him. Suddenly some insidious disease

lays a heavy hand on him. He fights against it with all his powers; he prays and hopes against hope. But in vain. Strength and life ebb away. The end approaches ineluctably. How cruel seems such a death, which tears a priest away from the beautiful plans and hopes of a sacerdotal career!

There a young missionary lies upon his bed of reeds in far-away Africa. How he loves his calling! How full of consolation and hope were the beginnings of his career! How he clings to his charges, and they to him! But the black fever has cast him on a bed of pain. He feels that his last hour has come. "O my God, not yet, no, not just yet! Do not take me away from my beloved children! Spare me, oh, spare me!"

On a deathbed at Sancian, Francis Xavier, the great Apostles of the Orient, passes away, only 46 years of age, in the midst of a glorious career, his eyes turned to the neighboring land of China, which he had longed to win for Christ. But no, it shall not be; he must bury all his great, far-flung plans with a sad *"Suscipe Domine"* and humbly resign himself to the will of God: *"Fiat voluntas tua!"*

II. Fear of Shame and Disgrace

1. A highly situated and respected priest, who stood without blame and was held in the highest esteem by all who knew him, suddenly falls under suspicion, is falsely accused and arrested. He is to be tried by a court which, he realizes, will make every effort to bring him and his calling into disrepute. On the morrow he is

to be condemned as a malefactor, publicly excoriated, and sentenced to die upon the gallows. What an unbearable burden would fall upon the soul of such a priest! An unutterable fear seizes him, and his soul cries out from the deepest depths: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me!"

2. And yet, what would all this be in comparison to the sorrow and anguish which the Divine Master faces, and which to-morrow will roll its polluted waters over Him like a flood! We can well understand why He cries: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me!"

V. THE ANGUISH OF REVULSION

"Coepit taedere." (Mark xiv, 33).

Revulsion is one of the most poignant of interior sufferings. It is the spiritual counterpart of physical nausea, which seizes delicately organized natures at the sight of disgusting objects. This loathing penetrates to the innermost soul and floods the whole being with dread and disgust. Who has not known this feeling that runs through the whole being like a cold paroxysm and casts its victim into the most abject misery?

In a similar manner a noble soul is repulsed by the sight of spiritual uncleanness, moral turpitude and baseness. These things act as repulsively as the miasmatic atmosphere of a cesspool. The greater the refinement of the soul, the more thorough the disgust and revulsion.

There were saints who fell into a faint at a mere glance of brazen shamelessness, at the sound of an impious utterance.

There were and are priests who in the confessional are overcome by spiritual nausea, convulsed with dread and disgust when forced to peer too deeply into the abyss of human degradation. The holy Curé of Ars was more than once carried unconscious from his besieged confessional. Not only fatigue, but nausea and disgust had overcome him.

We must engage in such reflections in order to understand, at least to some extent, the agony which laid hold of the God-Man when he beheld the depths of human malice and vulgarity open before him.

How revolting is one single sin, say, of impurity, in a priest. But here the *chronique scandaleuse* of all mankind lies open before His eyes. As the great rivers carry the refuse and filth of entire countries and their giant cities out to the sea, so the Most Pure Soul saw itself, as it were, submerged in a deluge of immorality emanating from all ages and countries. How horrible the filth that poured from ancient Babylon, Egypt, Assyria, Rome, and Greece! But perhaps the most dejecting of all the pictures that presented themselves to the mental vision of our Lord on this occasion was the sacrilegious defilement and degradation of the priesthood in His Church. What, according to His plans, should be the ideal of the priesthood? And how shamefully dishonored it appeared to Him in the brutal figures of innumerable priests of the past and the present,—those irreclaimable *concubinarii,* those vile

sollicitantes, who besmirch even the innermost sanctuary!

There pass before Him the examples of a temporarily lapsed cloister-life, those monstrous victims of a misguided mysticism perverted into sensuality.

Broken and besmirched the ideal of the priesthood lies in the filth of the gutter!

O priests of God, recall this vision of the suffering Saviour when the sight of so much vice, impurity, and degradation threatens to depress and deject you, when disgust would dampen your courage and devotion. *Coepit Jesus taedere.*

VI. THE AGONY OF FAILURE

I. Success

Success is the golden dream of the young priest, the most ardent wish of the older one: success in the pulpit, success in the confessional, success in catechising the children and preaching to the adult, success in administering his parish; success everywhere and always. Success, brilliant success, appears to many as the highest and only worth-while goal; failure as the greatest of evils, the most dejecting fatality. Undoubtedly failure is one of the bitterest experiences of a priest's life and yet there are but few who are wholly spared. All take failure hard; some can scarcely bear it.

It behooves us in such moments to go up to the Man of Sorrows, and to obtain from Him some consolation and balsam for the wounded heart.

II. The Failure of the Master

Evidences of this failure are:

1. *The principal scenes of His activities.*

Judea was the predestined theatre of the Messias. Here in this province, which was His home and where He began His activity, He accomplishes so little that after a short while He is forced to leave for Galilee, for the reason that, as the Evangelist says, "He would not walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him." (John vii, 1; cfr. John iv, 43; Matth. xiii, 57; Mark vi, 4). "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." (John i, 11).

Jerusalem. True, His advent in Jerusalem created a great stir, a few truth-seeking, noble souls, such as Nicodemus, find the way to Him. Among the people, too, some voices are raised in His favor. But in the main, His activities in the capital prove fruitless, as He Himself repeats in anguish of heart and amid bitter tears: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" (Matth. xxiii, 37; Luke xiii, 34; xix, 41; John xii, 37).

Nazareth, the beloved scene of His wondrous hidden life, is ungrateful and drives Him forth with murderous intent.

Samaria temporarily receives Him with joy, only to close its doors to Him later.

Gerasa implores Him to leave its boundaries.

Galilee. Here the labors of the great Teacher and Wonder-worker at first arouse an enthusiasm which has all the earmarks of a triumph. But the "Galilean Spring" is short-lived. The momentary success is

strikingly small. With a lamentation for the cities by the sea, the Master deserts this theatre of His activities, which exemplified some of the most beautiful features of His life. "Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida. . . . But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capharnaum, which art exalted unto heaven, thou shalt be thrust down to hell." (Luke x, 13, 14, 15).

This is the result of several years of exceptional labor! Recall the scenes of your labors, O Priest of God, and you will discover no such heart-rending failure.

And now let us picture to ourselves:

2. *The various classes of people for whom Christ labored.*

The People. They flocked to Him and applauded His utterances; but here also, how painfully is He disappointed!

Who are they that flock to Him? Not those who were invited first, the leaders of the people; they remain aloof, stubborn, murmuring, finding fault;—but rather those who live along the highways and byways, the poor, the suffering, who according to the parable occupy the banquet hall.

What is it that attracts so many to Him? They desire to be healed; they want to be fed. "You seek me," He says, "not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled." (John vi, 26).

The people drank in His words and His incompar-

able parables. "Thus no man had ever spoken." But what was the fruit of all these beautiful teachings?

Some of the seed which He scattered fell upon fruitful soil, but most of it fell by the wayside and was trampled upon, or among the thistles, or upon stony ground, where it decayed and died.

This parable of the sower gives us a deep insight into the suffering of the Saviour, who yearned for souls.

True, His beautiful similes were eagerly received, but only a few understood their real meaning; and what is worse: His Messianic office was not recognized by the people.

All His labors were in vain because of the hard-heartedness of these people, concerning whom the Old Testament Yahwe complained so often and so bitterly: "They have ears, but hear not, they have eyes, but see not." It is as though their eyes were veiled. "And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (John i, 5). The heathen centurion, the Samaritan woman, have greater faith and understanding than the children of the Kingdom. In short, the immediate success of His activity is distressingly small. His sowing is essentially for the future. Others will reap what he has sown. (John iv, 37 sqq.).

The Leaders of the People. Among those from whom the Messias had a right to expect the most complete understanding of His mission, He receives the least recognition. "Hath anyone of the rulers believed in Him, or of the Pharisees?" (John vii, 48).

A few approach Him, but the great majority oppose Him to a man.

And not only that they do not walk the way of salvation themselves, but they prevent others from doing so, strive with all their might and cunning to counteract His activity, seek to undermine His popularity among the people and sow weeds in His field. Behold the result in the terrible *Crucifige!* of the mob roused and enraged by the high priests and Pharisees. How deeply this unreasoning opposition wounded our Lord is evinced by the dreadful curse which he called down upon the Pharisees.

Do not the efforts of the Lodge and of all the other enemies of Christ against the Church at the present day constitute one of the greatest sources of sorrow for the ecclesiastical shepherds?

His Own. But perhaps the Master finds a more friendly reception among those who are near and dear to Him. Alas, here too He is painfully disappointed. There are, for instance, the disciples of John the Baptist. They cannot attain to the heights pointed out by the Master, but plod along on their own faul-finding, doubting, and self-seeking path. As for His "brothers," the select circle of His relations, they, too, refuse to believe in Him. (John vii, 5). "He is out of His mind," they say, when he speaks of His heavenly mission.

His Apostles. Between Him and His chosen band there grew up a beautiful and an intimate relationship. They leave their homes and families to join Him and

learn to understand Him better than the masses. And yet how defective, how earthly is their conception of His nature and mission; how petty is their wrangling among themselves as to the relative position they are to occupy in His kingdom; how weak their faith, how wavering their trust. For the great central idea of His life and mission, His Passion and death on the cross, they have no appreciation whatever. With the approach of Gethsemane and Golgotha their strength fails them utterly; one of them betrays Him, all flee and lose confidence in Him, while at the foot of the Cross but a handful of his followers remain true to Him.

The final conclusion of this tremendous drama seems to be a complete debâcle.

It was only after His death that success began to crown His efforts. "When I shall be raised aloft upon the Cross. . . ."

He saw the future, but was not permitted to taste the joy of His successful labors. The pain of apparent failure added to the intensity and poignancy of His suffering in the Garden. "My soul is sorrowful unto death."

III. The Harvest of the Future

1. *He, the Master, promised to His Apostles and to His Church the joy of success.* They were to reap in joy what he had sowed in sorrow. (John iv, 37).

2. *He Himself prayed for this success.* "And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me." (John xvii, 20).

3. *The success is great.* "But they going forth preached everywhere: the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed." (Mark xvi, 20). The history of the Church, from the time of the Apostles to the present day, gives evidence of the fulfillment of this promise. And if occasional failures are apt to dishearten us, a glance at the past will give us fresh courage by showing us that in spite of many vicissitudes and occasional temporary setbacks, the Church of God went forward and onward to victory and has become more and more a universal kingdom. This is an inspiration and an encouragement.

4. *Individual failures are numerous and trying.* But a glance at the Divine Saviour will always revive one's hope and courage. Jesus preached, lived and labored as no priest of God ever did before or since; He fulfilled all requirements on His part;—can this be said also of you?—and yet He was not to taste success until His earthly career was ended.

If your experience in a small way resembles His, go to Him and tell Him your troubles. He knows this anguish from personal experience, and how it hurts the soul of a zealous priest.

Look up to His Sacred Heart. In this Heart is a gaping wound; it is crowned with thorns; flames leap upward from it, and out of its depths grows a cross. Can you translate this symbol? Do you know its meaning?

What are all your sorrows, what all your real or

apparent failures, compared with the sorrows of Christ's Sacred Heart? And yet this Heart remained strong and faithful through all failures and disappointments. "I seek not my honor, but the honor of Him who sent me." The honor and glory of God is the ultimate goal of all things; but this honor frequently lies not so much in external successes as in the sum-total of the sacrifices demanded by every step on the road to achievement.

VII. THE BATTLE OF STRENGTH AND OF WEAKNESS

I. Weakness in Suffering

1. Who is it that sinks here beneath a burden of sorrow and anxiety? It is the Lord and Master, who otherwise always strengthens the weak, chides them for their faint-heartedness, and holds out to them a helping hand and the solace of His *nolite timere.*

He, the Leader, who had firmly trod the pathway of sorrow; He whose super-abundant strength and peace of heart had radiated so much consolation, courage, and confidence; He now appears on the Mount of Olives, bent to the earth, indeed as if completely broken in spirit. He shows this weakness unveiled in word and countenance. His face is ashen white, His eye lacks luster, His mouth groans, His lips quiver, His chest heaves, His knees tremble, His hands are stretched out as if warding off danger, His soul cries out to be relieved of its too heavy burden, and He struggles with Himself to attain the will to suffer; the bloody sweat,

which falls in heavy drops, betrays the terrible struggle endured by His Sacred Heart. The ocean of His soul is stirred to its depths.

2. This struggle in the Garden once for all corrects certain false conceptions of fortitude and strength in suffering. There is no contradiction in truly desiring to suffer, as Christ did, and then, when the hour of tribulation approaches, to shrink from suffering and become fully conscious of one's weakness. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."—*"Si delectaret Martyres mori, non inde viderentur mereri. Sed quia voluntatem non moriendi Deo subiiciunt, et, quod naturaliter fugiunt, propter Deum volunt, ideo merentur."* (Ludolfus of Saxony).

3. That is a consolation for the priest of God. Has he not similar experiences? He who appeared far superior to all the weaknesses of his people, who consoled the weak and the wavering in the confessional, in the pulpit and at the sick-bed—he experiences hours and moods which cast him down. All strength and certainty seem to vanish, and he almost collapses in unspeakable anguish and impotence. But this should not discourage him. The greatest Saints had their hours of weakness (cfr. 2 Cor. i, 8), and their very King and Leader trembled and quaked in the Garden of Olives.

II. Strength in Suffering

To have courage and strength in suffering, therefore, does not mean to rejoice ecstatically in suffering, or

to toy with the burden as an athlete with a heavy club. The important thing is that man, in battling with his feelings, does permit himself to rebel against God, to renounce his duty and his calling, but that, even though the act calls for a tremendous sacrifice, he utters a heroic *"Fiat voluntas tua!"* That is the victory of strength over weakness. In this very fact lies consolation and hope for us, that the Master, too, had to fight His way through, that He, too, had to wrestle with weakness and, realizing this weakness, cried out to the Father: "Let this chalice pass from me!"

But He does not pray unconditionally. Had He done so, His prayer would have been heard, and His lips would never have touched the bitter chalice. We know this from His own words: "Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and He will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matth. xxvi, 53). Was this perhaps "the temptation" of which St. Luke (iv, 13) speaks? True, it would not have been a temptation to sin, but an unconditional prayer would have affected our relationship to Him. He would not have become our Redeemer. The Redemption of mankind was not an obligation for Him, but purely an act of love, and He was free to refuse it. But He did not refuse. At the price of the most terrific struggle of the spirit, which culminates in a veritable death agony, He wards off the temptation and utters the decisive words: "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt." (Mark xiv, 36). It was a heroic act of courage and abnegation.

III. Lessons

The drama in the Garden of Olives should teach us three lessons:

1. We should control the strong manifestations of feeling (fear, sorrow, repugnance) so that they do not rule the spirit. One stronghold at least should remain which the enemy cannot take.

2. In hours of trial we must not change our decisions, but cling to them securely until the storm has blown over.

3. We should lay our sufferings before God in prayer and offer them as a sacrifice to Him.

VIII. CRITICAL PERIODS IN THE LIFE OF A PRIEST

1. *The temptation of the unattainable.* The path of virtue, which our Lord Himself calls narrow, is not only a narrow, but also a steep path. It can in fact become so steep that it ceases to be a path at all and we can ascend only by climbing up an almost perpendicular wall, lifting ourselves hand over hand slowly and painfully, with a yawning abyss below. Thus the exalted ideal of priestly virtue may loom in the distance as the peak of some lofty mountain, truly beautiful in the golden shimmer of light,—but tremendously high, in fact almost unattainable.

And yet, how powerfully the priestly heart is drawn towards that distant peak. With the aid of grace, with prayer and the summoning of all one's strength the ascent, which seemed impossible, becomes possible. But at times, in such moments of wearisome struggle,

comes the temptation to let go and sink into the depths.

These are the temptations of the unattainable.

Or we may be tempted to lie down and give up in despair: "I can't go farther; it is beyond my strength." This is not a formal apostasy, but rather a relinquishment of the ideal.

2. Such temptations to turn back, to cease striving for the higher life, sometimes come even to noble, saintly souls. A glance into the yawning abyss below and at the far distant heights above will frequently discourage the stoutest heart.

Have you not experienced such moments, such hours, such periods in your priestly life?

3. Here in the Garden of Olives the Master gives us an example how such critical moments and hours are to be overcome.

"Why this terrible death, which makes no impression upon millions; why this heroic love, which finds no response on the part of so many? Take away the chalice!"

No, No! Forward, onward, up the heights! We can, we will arrive on top! One powerful effort—and the goal, the glittering, dazzling heights are attained. "He who perseveres to the end will be crowned."

IX. PRAYER IN SUFFERING

Moods of discouragement and sadness are sources of danger to the priest, particularly if he allows weariness and disgust to overcome him and—*fails to pray.*

1. *The Master goes to pray.* *"Ibat,"* says the Gos-

pel. In times of depression one is tempted to omit one's customary prayers and instead seek consolation among men and in earthly things. To yield to this temptation may prove fatal. What does the Master do? Although He is sorrowful unto death, although the shadows fall ever more darkly across His soul, He goes to pray: *"Ibat secundum consuetudinem,"* *i. e.,* He sticks to His customary schedule of prayer at all costs. *"Ibat."* Do you do the same, O priest of God?

2. *Christ prays.* Perhaps the priest, too, goes to pray; but he carries his ill-humor with him, and instead of praying, gives himself over to melancholy brooding. Not so the Master. He devoutly prays, folds His hands, casts His eyes heavenward, and elevates His Heart. *"Orabat."*

3. *He lengthens His prayer.* A prayer clouded in melancholy and devoid of consolation is not likely to be lengthened, but rather to be shortened. What does the Master do? Although His prayer is far from yielding Him the customary consolation, and He is weighted down with a terrific burden that almost crushes Him to the earth, He perseveres in prayer, hour upon hour. *"Prolixius orabat."*

4. *He augments His external reverence.* In times of distress the temptation is strong to let oneself go, to relax the attitude of exterior reverence and seek comfort in physical ease. The Master, on the contrary, not only kneels down (*"positis genibus orabat"*; Luke xxii, 41) as is his wont, but He prostrates Himself on the ground. *"Procidit super terram."* (Mark xiv,

35); *"procidit in faciem suam."* (Matth. xxvi, 39).

5. *He prays orally and simply as a child.* When depressed by sorrow and in the throes of a tremendous interior struggle a man cannot pray as usual. Spirit and heart are as paralyzed. Freedom and exaltation are gone. The soul can express itself only in sighs, wails and sobs. Thus the Master turns to His Father like a child and appealingly repeats the simple petition: *"Abba, Pater."*

6. *He prays that suffering may be lifted from Him.* "Father, take this chalice from me." It is a cry of weakness.

Thus may we also long for the termination of a period of suffering, ask to have it shortened and even to have it averted, without renouncing our love of the Cross and the true desire of striving for virtue, if we only place our wills in accord with the divine will. "Not my will, but thine be done."

X. A PRAYER WITHOUT CONSOLATION AND EFFECT

I. A Prayer without Consolation

There is nothing sweeter than the consolation that comes through prayer. He who has once tasted "the sweetness of the Lord" (1 Pet. ii, 3) easily jumps at the conclusion that prayer is good only when it is filled with consolation. This mistaken notion is corrected by our Saviour in the Garden of Olives. The potency of prayer is measured in terms of its value to God, not

to us. But frequently its value before God is greatest when its sensible value to us is least.

There is nothing particularly praiseworthy in praying zealously as long as we are filled with consolation; but to pray, to continue to pray, without consolation, without joy, from the depths of suffering and sorrow, is an act that honors God and gives proof of strong faith, unwavering hope, and true charity.

Which prayer was more admirable,—that of Christ transfigured on Thabor, or suffering in the Garden of Olives? the prayer of a St. John of the Cross poured forth in glowing ecstasy or the song of love which came forth from the depths of the prison cell and was sung in the hour of desertion?

THE FOUNTAIN

Well I know the fountain which wells and flows,
Though 'tis night.
The eternal fountain which flows in secrecy,
Well know I where its flood-tide pours.
Though, 'tis night, etc.

Blessed Peter Faber once received a consoling enlightenment concerning his interior barrenness. "Nothing," he was told, "arouses in the soul such a tremendous desire for the consolation which God alone can give, and nothing so effectively discloses the truth that He is the source of all light, as this condition of interior darkness and aridity. But it is precisely this intense longing for Him, this realization that He alone can give true happiness to the soul, which honors God

most; not the basking in consolation. Persevere, therefore, until God sends the angel of consolation."

Father Isaac Jogues, S.J., the martyr of the Iroquois, when languishing in prison among the savage Mohawks, was in a semi-conscious state from hunger, cold, and torture, and found it impossible to pray in his customary manner; so he carved a cross with flint in a piece of bark and sat in silent, speechless adoration before it. Was this not a touching prayer?

II. A Prayer without Effect

The prayer of the Master in the Garden of Olives fulfills all the requirements of a perfect prayer. And yet He is denied that which we like to consider as the essential fruit of prayer: the *immediate* answer on the part of God. In spite of Christ's touching plea, the Father does not remove the chalice from His lips.

Whether our prayers will be heard, always depends upon one condition: the greater honor and glory of God. This and not the welfare of the creature is the measure and goal of all things: to this objective all things must be subjected and ordained. "Not my will, but Thine be done!"

The urgent appeal of the mother for the life of her only child, of the wife for the return of her husband, of the priest from out of the depths of a night of suffering are often in vain. God wills the sacrifice, wills the subjection of the timid heart to a stern fate. He desires the sweet incense of perfect resignation: "Not my will, but thine be done!"

He who does not understand this great fundamental principle of the spiritual life, the *"Omnia ad maiorem Dei gloriam,"* will be upset by every serious difficulty.

II. A Model Prayer

Christian asceticism has always orientated itself by our Lord's prayer in the Garden of Olives and based its laws and directions upon this divine pattern.

1. *Christ's prayer in the Garden of Olives presents all the external characteristics of a perfect prayer.*

1. *He separates Himself from His closest friends.* "And he was withdrawn away from them (*avulsus est ab eis*) a stone's cast," (Luke xxii, 41), *i. e.,* far enough that He would not be disturbed by them, yet sufficiently close that the disciples could witness all that happened.

He who would commune with God, must separate himself from men. No man can serve two masters.

2. *Christ prays in silent seclusion,* away from the noise and tumult of the world. The lonely garden, and in it, according to tradition, a quiet grotto, was the spot where our Lord loved to spend many evenings and perhaps nights in prayer, while His disciples slept quietly nearby.

He who truly loves prayer always longs for seclusion. Distant caves, wooded retreats, mountain tops, and hillside grottoes have ever been witnesses to the communings of God-loving souls and the mystic workings of grace.

3. *Christ prays with the greatest reverence in attitude and posture.* He folds His hands, casts Himself

upon His knees, and lies prone upon the earth. Folding the hands signifies a binding of oneself before God, the Lord and Master; kneeling is a sign of humiliation; to lie prone upon the ground is to assume the attitude of a sacrificial beast, ready to receive the death blow. "Here I am, do with me as you please."

O Priest of God, how do you measure up in respect to external reverence in prayer?

Behold, this reverence of posture and position is in itself a prayer, the expression of faith; it assists in pious prayer, by recalling the presence of God and keeping it alive; it makes prayer a matter of edification for others; it assists prayer in calling down divine grace. For to pray means to petititon, and this presupposes an attitude of humility, befitting a beggar.

II. *The Prayer of our Lord in the Garden of Olives bears all the interior characteristics of a true prayer.*

1. *Childlike Confidence.* In the midst of the most poignant suffering, He breathes forth the beloved name, "Father." God does not cease to be our Father, even when His hand rests heavily upon us, even when He apparently deserts us in darkness and anguish of soul. To call Him "Father," then, is evidence of the proper trust.

2. *Complete resignation and subjection to the Holy Will of God.*

> Thy Will be done, though I see it not;
> Thy Will be done, though I understand it not;
> Thy Will be done, though it pleaseth me not.

XII. DEVOTION TO DUTY AND CALMNESS IN SUFFERING

I. Devotion to Duty

1. As long as everything goes smoothly, pleasant relationships preserve the calm, and recognition and honor add their zest, devotion to duty is easy enough. But how burdensome it becomes when physical or spiritual difficulties beset our path. How easily we are tempted then, because of our own cares, to forget those of others and to depart from the difficult path of duty.

2. Not so the Master. He presents to the priest, especially to the pastor of souls, the splendid example of a calm and unperturbed fulfillment of duty, even under the pressure of keenest anguish. Three times, in spite of His weakness, in spite of a feverish pulse and quaking knees, He returns to His Apostles to warn and admonish them, as befitted a faithful guide and shepherd of souls. *"Non sic hodie multi pastores faciunt, qui subditis vigilantibus et in agonia positis dormiunt suaviter et quiescunt."* (Ludolfus).

II. Calmness in Suffering

1. To discharge one's duties faithfully in suffering is hard, but to preserve patience and gentleness is still harder. Torturing physical pains and interior anguish of spirit disturb the soul, wound it, and render it extremely sensitive.

How easily is the leader, the priest, the pastor, tempted at such times to allow his own bitterness and impatience to creep as a corrosive admixture into his admonitions and instructions.

2. *Not so the Master.* He does not let His beloved disciples feel His pain and anguish. True, He warns and admonishes them, earnestly and effectively, as His duty as superior demands; but he does so without heat, acerbity, or an undue display of temper.

And yet the behavior of His disciples in view of all that had taken place was improper, insulting, and scarcely defensible.

But the meek, charitable Heart of the Master has pity upon their weakness. He finds an excuse for them in spite of their repeated relapses:—"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak";—He treats them as poor, weak children, and allows them to sleep on. "*Dormite iam et requiescite (ait), ut ostendat suam ad eos compassionem, quia gravati erant, et ut somno recreati fugere possent.*" (Ludolfus).

3. Give ear, dear pastor of souls. How frequently must you go through a similar experience with your school children, your penitents in the confessional, your parishioners, even the best among them? In spite of all your admonitions, they relapse into the same sins, they make the same mistakes, show the same weaknesses, and so forth. To remain patient and meek under such trying conditions is not an easy thing. A glance at the Divine Master, however, will make it less difficult.

4. *The meekness of Our Lord displays itself especially in His suffering, and grows with it.*

During His public life, in accord with His mission, Christ sometimes deals sharply with His opponents. Harsh words fall from His lips, and a holy anger clouds His forehead. Now and then He censures even His disciples and apostles so sharply that they grow frightened.

But in suffering He displays no bitterness to His enemies, and to His disciples He is all charity. On the *Via Dolorosa* and on Golgotha, He is as meek as a lamb which is being led to the shambles. *"Considera in Christo mansuetudinem piam; quanto enim magis appropinquat ad mortem, tanto magis ostendit cordis sui dulcedinem."* (Ludolfus).

XIII. THE ANGEL IN THE GARDEN

"And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him." (Luke xxii, 43).

1. *"There appeared to Him an angel."* In some early Latin and Greek manuscripts this passage is omitted, probably for fear of scandal. But had not Christ taken upon Himself human nature with all its weaknesses? Did He not, as a poor weak infant, allow Himself to be nursed, protected, and taken in flight from Herod? Why, then should it be unworthy of Him to be consoled by an angel, after He had been tempted by Satan and refreshed by an angel after forty days' fast in the desert? (Matth. iv, 11).

"Humilis Dominus reverenter et humiliter suscipit hanc confortationem etiam a sua creatura, considerans se esse minoratum paulo minus ab angelis, dum est in hac lacrymarum valle et, sicut contristabatur ut homo, sic verbis angeli sui fuit confortatus ut homo." (Ludolfus).

2. *And the angel strengthened him.* Rightly has it been surmised that the angel in holy colloquy referred to the future operation of the grace of Redemption in millions upon millions of souls, in our churches and upon our altars, and referred to the numberless host of those "who have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Apoc. vii, 14).

Whatever this holy colloquy concerned itself with, it was as the viaticum of the martyr on his last journey.

3. *How frequently must not the priest play this rôle of the angel of consolation!* He cannot remove the chalice, he cannot banish pain and suffering. But his calm and gentle reference to the blessings of patient suffering for God's sake quiets the soul.

4. Does not this scene in the Garden of Olives involuntarily recall another angelic apparition?

Early one morning the Angel of the Incarnation appeared to Mary in quiet seclusion, to announce to her the plans of the Most High,—and she exclaimed: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done unto me according to thy word."

In the evening of another day the same angel appears to the Son of Mary in quiet seclusion, to hand Him in the name of the Father the chalice of suf-

fering,—and He says: "Not my will be done, but thine."

Thus swell into one grand symphony the morning music of the Incarnation and the evening music of the Redemption: *"Fiat voluntas tua!"*

XIV. "HE WHO SWEAT BLOOD FOR US"

1. If a strong man suddenly bursts forth into tears and groans, we know that he suffers unspeakably. Words of consolation are powerless in such a case. We stand speechless before such suffering. But what, if instead of tears, bloody drops of sweat gather on the forehead and trickle down over the pale countenance? Then one stands by astounded at such an unusual occurrence.

2. The bloody perspiration of the Master is evidence of a terrific and intense soul struggle; it is the external expression of suffering pushed to its farthest limit. The death agony drives all the blood to the heart and the congested flood retards that organ's activity. A terrible anxiety takes possession of Christ's whole being and soon becomes mortal agony.

By an extreme effort the heart seeks to release itself from the iron bonds of this embrace. The violent reaction sets free a stream of blood. Icy cold and fever heat alternate, the whole body quakes and trembles; the eyes burn, the heart pounds violently, and the final relief of the terrific struggle is in the bloody perspiration driven through the pores. "To weep tears of blood" is a figure of speech, which becomes reality here, nay

more than reality. "And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground." (Luke xxii, 44).

These bloody drops of sweat, which trickled slowly over the marble-white countenance, give the true picture of the bitter Passion, by means of which the faithful poignantly remember the suffering of Christ.

3. Scarcely another scene of the great tragedy makes such a powerful impression upon pious Christians as Christ sweating blood in the Garden of Olives. "He who sweat blood for us."

The many quiet wayside chapels erected in honor of this event give evidence of the hold this devotion has upon the people. The interior is rather dark; but as one approaches the iron grate, the prostrate form of our Lord becomes discernible. One discerns the outlines of His unspeakably sad countenance through the semi-darkness.

"He who sweat blood for us," mumbles the devout penitent, the humble laborer, the woman of many cares and family responsibilities, the child, who for the first time here realizes the actuality of the Passion.

4. What does this scene mean to the priest? It shows him at what cost the Master discharged His sacred duties as High Priest of humanity, and that the most strenuous resistance of His human nature could not deter Him. "To shed one's blood for another" is an expression that signifies a love and devotion which do not shun the greatest sacrifice.

The scene in the Garden also discloses to the priest

that this struggle with nature cost our Lord a tremendous sacrifice. There could be no more striking proof of this than the bloody sweat; and therein lies the consolation and the power of His example. "For you have not yet resisted unto blood." (Heb. xii, 4).

XV. A STRUGGLE UNTO BLOOD

1. In the priest's life, too, there are hours and days which call for violent combat. Sensuality, which appeared moribund beneath the ashes, flares up anew; the slumbering sexual passion awakens with unheard-of strength. There ensues a battle of life and death, a hard and decisive struggle for the jewel of priestly purity. As a ship trembles and quivers in the violence of a tornado, so the soul in this storm. An elemental power is released which it seems impossible to withstand. Yet you can and you must withstand. But you will be the victor only if you gather together all your spiritual powers and battle unto blood with the battle-cry: *"Malo mori quam foedari!"*

In the year 1538 Simon Rodriguez lay sick unto death in a deserted palace in Rome. Francis Xavier, who nursed his sick brother, had lain down on a straw mat for a short rest. Simon lay awake, feverishly tossing about on his bed. He beheld his slumbering companion and bethought himself of his great virtue. Suddenly the sleeping Francis arose with a violent gesture as if resisting an enemy. So terrific was the struggle that blood flowed copiously out of his mouth

and nose. He had dreamed of an attack on his priestly purity, in which he remained victorious.[1]

2. These are the great hours of priestly heroism, —a silent heroism which God alone sees.

How unjust is the world! Occasional scandals are ruthlessly paraded and mockingly pilloried before the public. But for every priest who stumbles in the battle, there are many, perhaps thousands, who fight victoriously unto blood; it is a fact which receives no recognition.

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the Church." (Col. i, 24). There is a suffering, a warfare which Christ, the all-pure Son of God, could not endure. Here the priest of God must make reparation. He must struggle and suffer, in order that others may be given the victory. Therefore, *"Suscipe, Domine!"*

XVI. ARISE, LET US GO!

The Fruit of Prayer (Matt. xxvi, 46)

1. *The Master* rises. His wan countenance still shows the traces of the spiritual struggle through which He has passed, but His eye is again clear, His look determined, His bearing upright, His stride and de-

[1] Schurhammer, S. J., *Der hl. Franziskus Xaverius, der Apostel des Ostens,* Aachen, 1920, pp. 21 and 25.

meanor direct and purposeful. He has regained His composure, which will not desert Him again to the end of His Passion. And His voice is resonant with the familiar courage: "Arise, let us go!"

That is the fruit of prayer. It does not take away the divinely-imposed sacrifice, but it gives courage and strength to bear it.

2. *The disciple.* How often has not a quarter or a half hour of devout prayer before the tabernacle brought similar results for the priest and pastor of souls!

His spirit was so depressed, so discouraged, that it appeared as if he would no longer be able to bear up. Then he had recourse to prayer before the crucifix or the tabernacle. And peace came, and with it willingness to suffer. "Thus let it be in God's name. Arise! Away with complaint! Forward!" *"Surgite, eamus!"*

Or perhaps an onerous task was assigned to you, which appeared impossible or unjust or beyond measure. Again you had recourse to prayer, again you petitioned Heaven from the depths of a depressed heart, and from out the struggle came the valiant resolve: "It must be! Arise, to labor and to work!" *"Surgite, eamus!"*

This should be the fruit of every meditation, of every holy Mass, namely, a renewed readiness to tread the path of duty and to take upon oneself the daily sacrifices and burdens which the life of a true priest entails. *"Surgite, eamus!"*

XVII. LONELINESS IN SUFFERING

"Torcular calcavi solus" (Is. lxiii, 3)

1. When despair threatens and the heart is full to overflowing, one is driven to confiding in others, to seek companionship. A friend or confidant is sought before whom one can pour out his troubles, in whom one finds sympathy, consolation, and encouragement. What balm for the heart at such a time if you find a friend in whose eyes the light of sympathy shines and who whispers consolingly: "Be of good cheer, I will stick to you and share your burden." How much lighter the load becomes if one finds such sympathetic help, and how much heavier if one is compelled to struggle alone or, seeking a friend, is rewarded with a cold unresponsive glance or empty words!

2. A bitter experience of this sort was that which the Master had in the Garden of Olives. Like all noble souls, of course, He desired to struggle alone and unobserved. Yet the consciousness of having near Him true, sympathetic hearts would have been a great consolation. This is made plain in the words He addresses to His Apostles: "Remain here and watch with me." It was nothing very difficult that He demanded, He did not ask that they should suffer with Him, but merely that they should watch with Him, as it were in the ante-chamber.

Should not this "with me" (*mecum*) have been an obligation of gratitude, after they had been allowed to approach Him so intimately at the Last Supper?

Should not the earnestness of the request have reminded them of their duty?

Three times He sought them to enjoy the consolation of their presence, three times He carried His pain and sorrow to them. And what does he find? Dumb, stunned, bewildered they look at Him, without a word of sympathy. And so He must struggle on, tread the wine-press of suffering alone, without friend or helper. *"Sustinui, qui simuli contristaretur, et non fuit; qui consolaretur, et non inveni."* (Ps. lxviii, 21).

3. Does not the Divine Master have similar experiences even to-day? What zeal does not the young levite display in the golden springtime of his priesthood; with what devotion and love does he not offer the daily Sacrifice, nestling close to the bosom of his beloved Lord like St. John! And then? Then comes the torrid summer of life and with it the days of lukewarmness. John and Peter and James stand at the altar cold, unconcerned, distracted, and wrapped up in their own thoughts, and scarcely think of the Master, who mystically renews His Passion before their eyes.

XVIII. THE SLUMBERING DISCIPLES

I. The Disciples Sleep

1. It is a sad picture which we behold. *There* the Master in overwhelming anguish, as though crushed by sorrow and suffering; *here* the slumbering disciples.

They sleep, though He has so earnestly beseeched them to watch and pray; they sleep, though they can

plainly read the terrible seriousness of the hour in His eyes.

2. And behold, it is the *élite,* His three chosen companions of Mt. Thabor, the two Sons of Thunder: John, who rested upon His breast; Peter, who had answered for all the others.

3. True, they are tired, tired from the day's march, tired from the Last Supper, distressed and unnerved by the sad mood which weighs upon them. The night is well advanced, their eyes have become heavy. There are valid excuses, so doubt; but the justified rebuke remains: "Could you not watch *one* hour with me?"

Did not this tragic situation call for more self-control and self-renunciation? How can one sleep, while a beloved Father or a devoted friend lies in his death agony in the adjoining room?

4. This distressing impropriety appears even more appalling upon closer inspection.

Christ's friends slumber, while His enemies are awake. They are watching and waiting:—Annas and Caiphas and the Elders; the Pharisees and Scribes and the members of the Sanhedrin are all watching, scheming, and planning how to capture, humiliate, and destroy Him;—and meanwhile His disciples sleep!

5. And is it not thus to-day? Evil is watchful, the good slumbers; godless science watches, studies, and strives restlessly, whereas Catholic science sleeps. Secret and inimical societies, frenzied finance, and other enemies are watching and spreading the net in which they would capture Christ and His Church,—while the disciples sleep. Many a "guardian of the

sanctuary," many a bishop, pastor, and religious sleeps, as though no souls were in danger and nothing at all were at stake.

II. The Disciples Slumber in Prayer

1. Doubtless they had given ear to the admonition of the Master and begun to pray. But alas! the gloomy mood lamed their strength; they relaxed and sank back into slumber. *"Invenit eos dormientes."*

2. And when the Master goes His rounds to-day, how many does He discover slumbering,—asleep during meditation, asleep while reciting the breviary, asleep while making their thanksgiving, scarcely a stone's throw removed from the tabernacle, asleep perhaps even in the confessional? Fatigue and exhaustion are the excuses made, and no doubt in many cases the benevolent Master will accept them. But frequently, very frequently, He will severely and accusingly repeat the words: "Could you not wake and watch one hour with me?"

3. "Simon, thou sleepest?" The Master accuses all of them, but particularly and in a special manner Peter, who, as leader of the others, was in duty bound to show greater zeal and give a good example to the rest. *"Quia in eodem defectu praelatus magis increpandus."* (Ludolfus).

Woe to the Church if her shepherds slumber in prayer! O Peter, Peter, hadst thou but watched! How many hours of bitter sorrow and compunction wouldst thou not have spared thyself! O priest of God, hadst thou watched in time of temptation, when

the Evil Spirit wove his net of intrigue, hadst thou persevered in prayer, thy plight would not now be so great! What revenge negligence has taken! "Watch and pray!"—

XIX. THABOR AND GETHSEMANE

1. *Contrasts.* There light—here dark night; there beatitude—here the agony of death; there the Father's tender voice: "This is my well beloved son . . ."—here the Father's unbroken silence; there Peter in raptures of bliss—here Peter humbled and crushed; there the glory of the transfiguration—here the deep shadows of the night of suffering.

Our Blessed Lord enacts before our eyes both the transfiguration of Thabor and the suffering of Gethsemane, in order that we may not despair when Gethsemane follows Thabor in our own lives.

2. *Chosen Souls.* To Thabor as well as to Gethsemane the Master takes with Him only a few chosen disciples. Out of the fullness of His charity and consideration He takes only those to witness His weakness who had witnessed His transfiguration. Only the three who had seen His countenance shine as the sun, were allowed to look upon that same countenance disfigured by bloody perspiration.

In this incident a fundamental principle of the operation of divine grace manifests itself. When God proposes to lead chosen souls to the heights of mystical prayer, to give them visions and ecstasies, He usually does so in order to prepare them for long nights of dreary suffering.

Hence he who has basked in the glory of Thabor must prepare for Gethsemane.

To participate in Christ's transfiguration as well as in His agony and suffering, is a special grace that is granted only to chosen souls.

In the lives of great saints we find Thabor and Gethsemane, ecstasies and bloody stigmata, curiously intertwined as roses and thorns in a garland.

3. Apparently, the blissful hour of Thabor had failed to prepare the disciples for the painful watch in the Garden. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that it did not fully accomplish its purpose, for the magnificent revelation on Mt. Thabor remains latent in their subconscious minds. Thus, while they display weakness, they do not collapse entirely. Thus may the memory of great priestly graces grow dim in our souls, but if we had a real experience like that on Thabor, it will remain an active element in the mind and ward off the worst. Woe to the priest who has never experienced an hour on Thabor and has never really learned "how sweet the Lord is." For him there is no saving pole-star in the dark and stormy night.

III. FIRST INTERVAL—THE STORY OF AN APOSTATE

THE betrayal of Christ by Judas and His denial by Peter belong to the saddest intervals of the drama of the Passion. How sharply these two events struck at the Heart of the Divine Master is disclosed by the fact that He foretold them both and frequently spoke of them with deep sorrow. In comparison, all else seemed paltry. The sufferings inflicted by the enemy were not nearly so bitter as the wounds caused by His friends.

In both the betrayal and the denial there is unrolled before us a large section of the priestly life, full of practical lessons and warnings.

THE STORY OF AN APOSTATE

The act of Judas is the unspeakably sad conclusion to an Apostolic life which had begun hopefully.

How it all came about, how the interior decay set in and developed, must remain a mystery. It resembles the quiet volcanic action that goes on in the bowels of the earth and suddenly bursts forth in all its fury to convulse the earth.

Still the course of development can be accurately traced in its principal stages.

XX. JUDAS' GOOD BEGINNING

A. His Early Life

It is not permissible to regard Judas Iscariot as a born criminal, suffering from hereditary oneration. This idea could not be made to square with the known facts. Had he been corrupt and unworthy from early youth, the Master would never have included him among His chosen disciples. True, Jesus foresaw the future; but He accepted this man as he was at that time.

St. Peter speaks of Judas as one "who was numbered with us and obtained part of this ministry." (Acts I, 17).

B. His Vocation to the Apostolate

1. *Judas had a true vocation.* The remarkable personality of our Lord and His extraordinary miracles undoubtedly exercised a strong appeal. Judas joined Him in good faith, though not with the loving enthusiasm of St. John. If earthly hopes and aspirations insinuated themselves into his motives, we must not forget that this was the case also with the other Apostles and disciples.

He is one of the twelve, whom the Master chose after a night devoted to prayer (John vi, 71) and whose name appears in the bead-roll of the Apostles (Luke vi, 13 sq.). "He (Christ) called unto him whom he would himself," records St. Mark (iii, 13).

Judas was one of those whom the Father gave Him

(John xvii, 6). The reality and validity of his vocation cannot, therefore, be questioned, and the medieval belief that he had wormed his way into the Apostolic college by simonistic practices or through the intercession of Mary, has no foundation in fact.

The sad finale of his life in no way impairs the validity of his vocation, no more than the consequent apostasy of a priest proves that he was not called to the sacerdotal office.

2. *Judas participates in all the graces and privileges of the Apostolic vocation.* The Saviour receives him, like the other Apostles, as a friend ("I no longer call you servants, but friends"), as a disciple ("To you it is given to understand the mysteries of God"), and as a co-worker. He sends him forth to preach and to perform miracles. Judas works successfully and rejoices in his success as do the others. (Cfr. Mark vi, 7 sq.; Luke ix, 1 sqq.; Matt. x, 1 sqq). With the other Apostles he is a witness to the miracles wrought by Christ. More than that: he is entrusted by the Master with a commission of honor,—he is appointed guardian of the common treasury and purchaser of supplies (John xiii, 29). For these duties Judas was no doubt peculiarly fitted.

The other Apostles, too, treat him as a duly empowered and beloved co-worker, whom they trust unto the end and upon whose judgment they evidently place a certain degree of reliance. (Cfr. Matt. xxvi, 8; John xii, 4).

None of them, with the possible exception of John (who had the delicate instinct of love), suspected any

wrong, so that the final *dénouement* took them completely by surprise.

3. *Judas possessed all the qualifications necessary for his vocation.* Christ, who was careful in the choice of His Apostles, would not have selected one who was incapable. *"Ego vos elegi."*

The sparse, bold strokes of the Gospel make Judas appear as a man of talent, ability, and determination, who might have accomplished great things had he not strayed from the straight and narrow path.

Supernatural grace was not withheld from him. Judas could have become a Saint, just as well as Peter, Philip, Thomas and the rest, and if he had, we should pray to day: "Saint Judas, intercede for us!" Peter, on the other hand, with his pride and self-consciousness, could have become a traitor to His Lord.

Faults, weaknesses, difficulties and critical hours were not peculiar to Judas alone; the others had them, too.

That Judas, for a while, loved the Master, that Christ's appearance, holiness, and charity made a deep impression upon the man from Kariot, may be gathered from his conduct in the hour of despair. In short, there is no doubt that Judas had a vocation to the Apostolate and this very reason renders his fate so tragic and a warning example for all ages.

4. *Is this not also the story of many apostate priests?* They, too, had a vocation and perhaps for long years tasted the sweetness of their calling, experienced hours of ecstatic joy and sweet spiritual consolations. The vocation, as such, was not the cause of their down-

fall, and it is a lie if apostates declare this to have been the case.

XXI. THE DOWNFALL OF JUDAS

A. ITS CAUSES

Two vices, unbelief and avarice, inspired the foul deed of Judas Iscariot, as so many others in later ages.

1. *Unbelief*

(a) Christ's teaching about the "Bread of Life that comes from Heaven," the Flesh and Blood of the Lord, with which He would nourish His children, was a stumbling-block to Judas. "This teaching is hard," muttered some of the disciples; "who can bear it?"

That Judas belonged to these incredulous disciples the Gospel of St. John, the beloved Apostle, leaves no doubt. "There are those among you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning, who they were that did not believe and who he was that would betray him." (John vi, 65).

Thereafter many of His disciples left Him and no longer associated with Him. "Will you also go away?" asked the Master. Thereupon Peter, in the name of all, voiced the beautiful declaration acknowledging the divinity of Jesus: "We have believed and have known that thou art the Christ, the Son of God." But Judas no longer shared this belief.

"Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? Now he meant Judas Iscariot, the son of

Simon: for this same was about to betray Him." (John vi, 71 sq.)

(b) The ruin of the majority of apostate priests generally begins at the altar and the tabernacle. The joy of faith dies, and with it the love of vocation, which, without this faith, has no meaning. When the thought of eternity ceases to influence a man he loses his grasp and the great motive of the priestly life with its sacrifices. The bonds that hold the baser passions in check have been broken. Interiorly chaotic, embittered, disgusted, the unfortunate priest drags on. The power of circumstances and a sense of shame prevent him from breaking with his accustomed environment, human respect restrains him from going to extremes. Years, many years may elapse before the catastrophe sets in, unless, as in the case of Judas, a strong passion drives him to quicker action.

2. *Avarice*

(a) Under the influence of grace and of enthusiasm for Christ and His work, Judas' passion is temporarily restrained, but soon it flames up with renewed strength. Judas begins by stealing small sums from the common treasury, in order to provide for emergencies. But there was not much to take and less to hope for in the future. The clearly predicted death of the Master presaged the end of all Messianic dreams. Why not prepare in time and align himself with the victorious party of the high priests? In that direction lay promise

of gain and protection. The scene in Bethania, Judas' disappointment at the loss of the 300 *denarii,* hasten the execution of a long harbored purpose.

(b) The inordinate inclination grows stronger and more irresistible. Judas now drops the mask. He approaches the enemy and sells his Master. "Then went one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, to the chief priests, and said to them: "What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? But they appointed him thirty pieces of silver." (Matt. xxvi, 14 sq.).

"What will you give me?"

How harsh this question sounds in the mouth of an anointed disciple and Apostle of Jesus!

"Avaro nihil scelestius" (Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man), says S. Scripture. (Ecclus. x, 9). How true this is! The covetous man is willing to sell everything and everybody for money: his father, his brother, his best friend, his honor, his conscience, and his soul!

"It is a disgrace to humanity, but so long as there are men who will bribe a traitor, just so long there will be traitors." (Mislin).

"What will you give me?" Thus asks the apostate, ready to barter his holy vocation, his priestly dignity, his Church, and his Redeemer.

There was a time when his Saviour was more to him than all else in the world. But now?—O God! For what tainted gold is Christ not often sold by His priests! *Obstupescite, caeli!*

B. THE DÉNOUEMENT

It will be useful to study more closely the way in which the interior ruin of Judas was accomplished. The first symptom of his apostasy is:

1. *Stubborn taciturnity.* Oh, had Judas but retreated when the Master suggested it to him ("Do you also wish to go?"). Unfortunately, he was restrained by a sense of shame from abandoning the accustomed circle of his friends.

He remains, conforms outwardly, even though inwardly he is no longer one of them. He locks the dark secret into his heart, does not confess openly and covers his interior default with the mantle of outward conformity. This conduct makes him

2. *A despicable hypocrite.* He feigns friendship for his fellow-Apostles, who are so thoroughly deceived by his hypocrisy that they suspect nothing; he feigns sympathy for the poor (John xii, 5 sq.), loyalty to the Master, and has the audacity, when the latter announces the betrayal, to display a mien of innocence and carries out his rôle to the very kiss in the Garden. Fie upon such despicable baseness! Nowhere does the poison weed of hypocrisy flourish so luxuriously as in the garden of religion, on rich clerical soil. The priest or religious who has lost the faith has no other choice but complete conversion or to play the hypocrite in the pulpit, in the confessional, and at the altar,—to act as a true disciple while he harbors betrayal in his heart.

"Woe to you, you whitened sepulchers!" From there it is but one step to

3. *Sacrilege.* Conscious of his traitorous conduct, with the wages of treason in his pocket, with mortal sin in his soul, Judas seats himself with his fellow-Apostles at the Last Supper, deceives them even at this stage of the tragedy, and sacrilegiously partakes of the Flesh and Blood of the Lord.[1]

And then he goes out into the night. (John xiii, 30) and

4. *Falls completely into the power of the Evil One.* "Satan entered into him." (John xiii, 2, 27). The whole frightful result of apostasy is here expressed in one word. It is, indeed, as if Satan took possession of an apostate and transformed him into a devil. Hatred, pride, obstinacy, resentment against God and all that is holy, a desire for evil fill his black soul.

All sense of truthfulness, honor, and decency vanishes. He stops at nothing mean and despicable,—in short, he is transformed into a veritable devil. *"Intravit in eum Satanas."*

XXII. THE SIGNIFICATION OF THIS MYSTERY

1. *In regard to God.*

Peter falls and Judas falls. Two disciples of the same Master, pupils in the same school, confrères of the same beloved disciple, bearers of the self-same powers and miraculous promises. A ray of grace falls upon both; but this ray, while it softens the one,

[1] At least in intention; we do not believe that Judas actually participated in the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

hardens the other. Peter goes out and weeps; Judas goes out and despairs.

Here we are face to face with a mystery of the divine economy of grace, such as we frequently meet in the life of priests. Two fall; the one finds the way back, the other goes permanently astray. Why? "How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!" (Romans xi, 33).

2. *In regard to the Master.* This touching trait must not be omitted from the picture of His life and suffering.

(a) He desires to endure all sufferings and to transfigure and spiritualize them all. But the treason of Judas is one of the bitterest. Of none other does He speak so frequently; none other so pierced His Sacred Heart and wounded it so deeply.

(b) It is a touching revelation of His goodness and charity that He not only suffers one so unworthy to remain at His side, but treats him so graciously and kindly that none of the other Apostles harbor the slightest suspicion.

3. *In regard to the Church of the future.*

(a) The example of Judas stands out before all in order that none shall lose faith in the Church when some of her priests turn traitors.

(b) It is designed to console ecclesiastical superiors (the Pope, bishops, religious superiors) when they experience similar defections among their charges.

4. *In regard to the priesthood and individual priests.* Even the highest and holiest of all vocations, which leads to intimate companionship with Jesus, offers no

certain protection. Lucifer fell from the heights of Heaven; the path into exile leads from Paradise; in the immediate circle of Christ's best friends there was a Judas.

Thus we have known priests, apostles, who at one time stood immaculate at the altar and announced the eternal verities with tongues of flame, who experienced sweet hours of intimate communion with their Lord and Master, yet in the end fell victims to some passion, fell miserably into the deepest depths, and from angels became devils. "Wherefore he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x, 12).

IV. THE CAPTURE OF CHRIST BY HIS ENEMIES

XXIII. THE LEADER OF THE MOB

"Behold, . . . he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them!" (Luke xxii, 47).

I. *"One of the twelve."* Not without a purpose does the Gospel emphasize this fact. *Judas was not a layman,* he was a priest, a member of the clergy, Christ's *élite,* the number of those whom "the Father had given to Him," who were near and dear to Him. There is the sting. "If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it. . . . But thou a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar!" (Ps. xliv, 13). And this traitor abuses friendship's secrets and the knowledge he had gained of places, times and circumstances, betrays his knowledge to the enemy, makes revelations, advises the enemy how best to catch the Master. What despicable conduct!

II. "He went before them."

1. It would have been bad enough if Judas had followed the mob at a distance; it would have been worse had he joined them as they advanced to catch

Jesus; but what he actually did was the worst he could have done:—he, the former Apostle, placed himself at their head and directed the attack.

2. O God! what can become of a disciple of Christ, a priest and religious, if he strays from the straight and narrow path? A thief who steals the property of the Church, a deserter who aligns himself with her enemies, a traitor who betrays his bishop and his erstwhile confrères, a contemptible hypocrite, a sacrilegious robber!

3. *Why did our Lord desire to suffer this bitter portion?* For the consolation of the Church in future ages, of her bishops and religious superiors, among whose most bitter experiences is the base treason of some of those whom they have trained and aided and raised to the priesthood. The example of Christ shows them how this cross must be borne. *"Christus Dominus sustinuit Iudam proditorem, ergo non sustinebo Britium calumniatorem?"* (St. Martin of Tours).

XXIV. THE KISS OF JUDAS

"And forthwith coming to Jesus, he said: Hail Rabbi. And he kissed Him." (Matt. xxvi, 49).

I. The Kiss of Judas on the Mount of Olives

It is unspeakably vile. Judas Iscariot abuses the sacred sign of peace and confidence, the sweet token of love and friendship, as a means of betrayal. *"Ve-*

nenum infundit osculo, quo gratia caritatis infunditur, osculo, quod sacrae pacis insigne est, osculo, quo amicitia fide firmatur, osculo, quo fides sancta signatur." (St. Ambrose, *In Ps.*, 39).

He seeks to deceive by a greeting and a kiss. This is an act of brazen insolence towards Christ, His Master, an act of vile hypocrisy and dissimulation towards his former comrades. This villainous conduct has rightly brought down upon the one-time apostle the contempt of all ages.

There can be nothing more disgraceful than this act of Judas. Ludolfus draws a beautiful lesson from it: "*In recolendo hunc articulum de falso osculo Iudae poterit homo per contrarium cum sincera fide et devotione osculari pedes crucifixi, indignum se reputans osculo oris, ad quod ille infelix Iudas accedere praesumpsit.*"

II. The Kiss of Judas at the Altar

1. Only too frequently is this act of Judas repeated in the Eucharistic life of Christ, most tragically among the later disciples of Christ, His priests, at the altar.

The daily Sacrifice, intimate communication with the mystery at the altar, is a special grace, but one not without danger. *Consueta vilescunt.*

Thus it may happen that because of increasing lukewarmness, a dimming of the faith, and sinful habits, the sacred bond of love is loosed and the priest grows interiorly corrupt and his heart becomes hardened.

And then? Then the priestly Judas approaches the altar clothed in the sacred vestments, which are the privilege and sign of Christ's disciples, with pious prayers upon his lips, which breathe devotion, love, and faith, greeting the Master with holy ceremonies and gestures of reverence and friendship, exteriorly still a devout disciple, regarded as such by his unsuspecting fellow-Apostles, reverenced and held in high esteem by the faithful laity, but interiorly a Judas, a traitor and a despoiler of divine things.

2. Quiet whisperings of reproach seem to emanate from the tabernacle: "Friend, whereunto art thou come?" . . .

Judas in the Garden of Olives went this far, but no farther, whereas the Judas at the altar continues to play his rôle with brazen impudence to the end, simulating piety and sacrilegiously handling the Body of the Lord.

Judas played the rôle of traitor once, the fallen priest plays it day after day, many hundred times. He conceals his crime and piles sacrilege upon sacrilege.

Oh, what hard hearts are to be found among priests! How avarice and unchastity can harden a priest until the holiest and tenderest words no longer make an impression upon it!

Judas-like priests are and will ever be the greatest heart-ache of holy Church. *"Perceptio corporis tui, Domine Iesu Christe, quod ego indignus sumere praesumo, non mihi proveniat in iudicium et condemnationem, sed pro tua pietate prosit mihi ad tutamentum mentis et corporis."*

XXV. FRIEND, WHEREUNTO ART THOU COME?

(Matt. xxvi, 69 sq.)

I. The Treatment of the Betrayer

1. Judas is the archetype of all those hypocritical, insincere, and deceitful natures that plot betrayal under the mask of friendship. There are no scoundrels more worthy of condemnation and contempt. One could spit upon them in holy anger.

And yet, how frequently are not ecclesiastical superiors and pastors compelled to deal with such Judas-like natures, unable, through circumstances, to ward off the kiss of these sweetly smiling betrayers. How difficult it is not to become enraged at such rascals.

The Master restrains Himself and in so doing gives to superiors and pastors a marvelous example of perfect self-control and incomparable meekness.

2. *The Master:* What does He do, what does He not do?

(a) He does not turn His face away; He allows Himself to be embraced and kissed without resistance; though the lips of the betrayer burn hot upon His sacred countenance, there is no show of temper, no harsh word is uttered.

(b) Not only does He not give the deeply fallen disciple an occasion to harden his heart, but He stretches out His hand to forgive him. True, He lets him know that He knows everything, that He sees through his wicked purpose, but He says not in contempt and

anger, but with a voice full of kind pity: "Friend, whereunto are thou come? With a kiss thou betrayest the Son of Man."

He calls him "friend," in order that He might recall cherished memories of their past intercourse. Everything about the Master, His eye, His words, and His countenance, speak the language of loving sorrow.

II. The Last Grace

1. O Judas, there is still time to repent! The arms and the Sacred Heart of Christ are still open to you. A single word of contrition, a sorrowful glance, and He will forgive you.

But this one word is not spoken, and this last grace —for such was without doubt the mild admonition of the Lord—is spurned, and Judas is lost.

Judas, behold your Master for the last time, for you shall never, never see Him again!

2. How frequently does not a similar occurrence take place when Judas-like priests who have gone astray, fail to return. The grace of God has definite limits. There is a last and final grace—even for the priest.

XXVI. "IT IS I"

(John xvii, 5)

1. Once more the sun bursts forth victoriously through the clouds, which shall later again hide it.

Before the Master surrenders His humanity, He once more reveals His divinity.

"It is I." The word is His sole weapon; but it comes from His lips as the word of God, it falls as a thunderbolt from above. The mob falls to the ground like leaves driven by a storm; the brutal cohort, so confident of victory, crashes as a proud fir struck by lightning.

"Vox Domini virtute, vox Domini concutientis cedros." (Ps. xxviii, 4). He reveals to them His power, that they may realize they are dealing with no ordinary mortal, but with One who has the power to sacrifice His life and to reclaim it, according to His good pleasure.

They seek a man, but they find a God; they believe themselves superior by their number, and yet Jesus casts them down; they rely on their weapons, but one breath completely upsets them.

2. "It is I." Were the Lord suddenly to appear from out of the mysterious depths of His Sacrament, stand forth in all His glory, and loudly and solemnly announce: "It is I," what a tremendous effect these three words would have! The tepid would be aroused from their languor, the wicked would sink down as if struck by lightning, while every just man would joyfully cry: "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus will not utter these words now. But the hour will come, the hour of final revelation at the Last Judgment, when this *"Ego sum"* will exercise a tremendous and remarkable effect upon millions and millions of people.

But already here on earth there are moments when the sudden revelation of the truth of these words can

exert a crushing influence. If not sooner, then certainly in the hour of death. "Thou hast hidden thyself behind doubts and hast denied me! It is I. Woe to thee! Thou hast toyed with My sacred promises and admonitions. It is I. Woe to thee!"

3. *Why do these words exercise no lasting effect?* Why is it that the mob, having scarcely regained their feet, have apparently forgotten what has just happened?

The answer is supplied by the prophet Jeremias: "Thou hast struck them, and they have not grieved. Thou hast bruised them, and they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than the rock, and they have refused to return." (Jer. v, 3).

This answer reveals the whole history of a queer people. The Israelites beheld, as no other people, the angry omnipotence and miraculous power of God. They witnessed the majesty of Yahwe on Mount Sinai and cast themselves tremblingly to the earth. Then they arose and within sight of the holy mountain danced gaily about the golden calf.

How often had not the Jews witnessed miracles wrought by our Lord, overpowering proofs of His divine omnipotence! They did not deny the facts ("This man performs wonders"); but in spite of their conviction they exclaim: "He must die."

Is not the same scene frequently enacted in the lives of priests? The hand of God has touched them. They are frightened and tremble. But scarcely has God withdrawn His punishment, when they blindly re-

turn to their sinful ways. "They have made their faces harder than the rock, and they have refused to return."

XXVII. THE SWORD OF PETER

I. Peter Reaches for the Sword

The sudden attack fills the disciples with fear and alarm. But the poise of the Master and the lightning-like power of His word soon restore their courage. Their hot Galilean blood rises up and urges them to quick deeds.

"Master, shall we attack?" The impulsive Peter does not wait for the answer, but grasps his sword and brings it down with full force upon Malchus, cutting off his right ear. Covered with blood and stunned by the powerful blow, Malchus falls to the ground. The whole incident reveals how confused and unspiritual was the conception of the Apostle, who had no other thought than that force must be met with force.

II. The Master Commands Restraint

1. Before Peter could strike a second blow, the Master raised His cautioning voice: "Put up thy sword into the scabbard."

Firmly and unmistakably the Master condemns the inconsiderate deed, in words that were clearly intended to serve as law for the Church of all future ages.

2. *Why not employ force?* The Master gives two reasons.

(a) "For all that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matt. xxvi, 52; cfr. "Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed." Gen. ix, 6).

The Church shall not shed blood even in justifiable defense. Upon these words of the Lord are based the ecclesiastical laws regarding the carrying of weapons and the shedding of blood, except in cases of absolute necessity. Bloodshed is incompatible with the *mititas,* the meekness and mildness proper to the priesthood. Indeed it is a distinguishing mark of the Church of Christ that she does not hold her own by physical force, but rather through the courage inspired by faith and and the patience characteristic of martyrs. The Church uses the staff of the shepherd, not the sword. Peter here typifies those combative prelates, only too numerous in feudal times, whose attitude can be explained, though not justified, by the barbaric conditions and the political upheavals of the time in which they lived.

(b) "Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and he will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that so it must be done?" (Matt. xxvi, 53 sq.)

Hence suffering and patience belong essentially to the vocation of the Saviour. A guiding and directing power stands behind the dark mystery of suffering. It was not the enemy who presented the bitter chalice to Jesus Christ, but the Father. Men are but the

instruments for the execution of the divine plans.

3. As the Master, so the Church may and should raise her voice against the abuse of power, but she shall not herself grasp the sword. "To suffer with dignity, not to fight without dignity" is her mission.

This does not mean that the Church may not call upon the power of God to defeat her enemies. (*"Ut inimicos sanctae ecclesiae humiliare digneris—te rogamus, audi nos."*)

But if God plainly inflicts grave affliction, we should not ask for an unusual interference of Divine Providence and build all hope thereon. One day the hour of universal reckoning will come and in the twilight of the last day the Church will witness the destruction of her enemies. Until then patient suffering is her lot.

XXVIII. THE CARES OF THE SHEPHERD.

"If therefore you seek me, let these go their way." (John xviii, 8).

1. In the midst of danger, in the tumult of a bloodthirsty mob, the Master thinks of those "whom the Father has given Him," and is concerned about their safety.

The plans of the Sanhedrin without a doubt included the capture of the disciples. The first question which Annas asked Jesus concerned His disciples (John xviii, 19). The entire nascent Church was to be destroyed with one fell stroke.

But it was not the intention of the Master that His Apostles should suffer and die with Him. They were

not yet strong enough for such a test. Moreover He had assigned to them another task. Therefore, He shields them. Under the influence of His powerful words which cast down the mob, His cry, "Let these go!" becomes a command. Thus was fulfilled His prediction made a few hours before: "While I was with them, I kept them in thy name. Those whom thou gavest me have I kept." (John xvii, 12).

2. How beautiful is this concern of the Master for His own and His loving condescension to their weakness! Religious and other ecclesiastical superiors may learn from this example, not to subject their charges indiscriminately to unduly difficult tasks, particularly those who are not yet sufficiently strong in spirit. *"Per hoc ostenditur, quod superiores debent suos subditos fideliter adiuvare et pro eorum defensione se mortis periculo exponere."* (Ludolfus).

3. As a matter of fact this example has not gone unheeded. An archbishop, St. Josaphat, met his enemies, who had entered the archiepiscopal palace with murderous intent, with these words of meekness and composure: "Why do you strike my servants? If you have anything against me, here I am." And he sacrificed his life to save theirs.

And in the life of the saintly confessor, Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, we read: *"Tum ad milites: Vos Dei iussu cavete, ne cuipiam meorum noceatis. Deinde flexis genibus . . . caput . . . impio ferro praecidendum obtulit."* (*Brev. Rom., Pars Hiem.*, 29. Dec.)

Where did the saints learn this lesson?

XXIX. THE BONDS OF CHRIST

"Then the band and the tribune, and the servants of the Jews, took Jesus and bound Him." (John xviii, 12).

I. Bonds of Humiliation

1. To apply bonds is the prerogative of the victor. At the moment when Jesus allows Himself to be bound, He surrenders Himself into the hands of His enemies, and since the idea of a voluntary surrender was beyond their comprehension, they saw in the bonds only the assurance of His defeat and their victory. What they had so frequently attempted in vain, namely, His capture, has now taken place. They lead Him away in triumph.

How easy it would be for Him, the strong Samson, to break these fetters. But He does it not, for He wills to suffer, and therefore forgoes voluntarily every outward display of power and surrenders Himself unreservedly to His torturers. It is the first act of the bloody sacrifice, the binding of the sacrificial victim. *"Oblatus est, quia ipse voluit."*

He surrenders His greatest good, His freedom and independence, and touchingly prays: *"Suscipe, Domine, universam meam libertatem."* "He loved me and delivered himself for me." (Gal. ii, 20). "As Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice." (Eph. v, 2).

2. And you, young priest of God, rebel against every

restriction of your freedom and independence, you glory in your rights and privileges, you strain at the holy bonds of your vocation and your vows, and attempt to secure as independent a position as possible towards your divinely appointed superiors? You should be ashamed of yourself at the sight of your shackled Saviour!

II. Bonds of Pain

1. The bonds, ropes and perhaps even chains (cfr. Acts xxi, 33) are drawn cruelly tight, because of fear that He might break them by magic. "Lay hold on him, and lead him carefully" (Mark xiv, 44), the betrayer had admonished them. What is it that I see? These sacred hands, which filled everything they touched with graces and blessings, are deeply gouged by the shackles, swollen and bloody.

2. It was the thought of these bloody marks and these pains that filled such Christlike souls as the anchorite Eusebius, Saints Silvan and Ulfric, Saints Zita and Rose of Lima, and many others with the desire to imitate their Lord and Master by fettering themselves with sharp-edged chains, knotted ropes, and pointed rings.

Do you now and then recall, O priest of God, that the maniple and stole typify these bonds of Christ?

III. Bonds of Love

This fettering of the God-Man is renewed in a touching manner in the Holy Eucharist. Like a helpless

lamb He allows Himself again and again to be bound and fettered, and, forgoing every expression of His power and dignity, permits Himself to be led to the slaughter,—even at the hands of a sinful and unworthy priest!

And, just as in Gethsemane, this shackling was interpreted as an indication of impotency and brought down upon the Master contempt and revilings, so also in the Sacrament of His love, this complete relinquishment of His power, glory, and free self-determination becomes the occasion for widespread contempt and mockery. *"Oblatus est, quia ipse voluit."*

IV. Bonds of Honor

The chains of Christ rattle through the ages. An endless row of fettered and chain-bearing popes, bishops, priests, and confessors fills the vista of the future, with St. Peter at its head, who as yet cannot believe that his Master is led away as a prisoner. Later on he learned to understand this apparent helplessness, this mystery of weakness.

Since Christ, the chief High Priest, bore fetters, it has become an honor to share the same. With holy pride the Apostle of the Gentiles called himself "the prisoner of Jesus Christ" (Eph. iii, 1; Philem. 9). Thousands of martyrs and confessors have kissed their chains and bonds with holy fervor, and even at the present day the Church triumphantly celebrates the feast of St. Peter in Chains (August 1). *"Felicia vincula, quae reum suum usque ad Christi crucem non*

tam condemnatura, quam consecratura miserunt." (S. Aug., *Serm. 29 de Sanctis*).

XXX. CHRIST'S CAPTURE IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

1. He who would continue Christ's mission, must be prepared for opposition and hatred on the part of the world. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John xv, 20). "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons, dragging you before kings and governors, for my name's sake." (Luke xxi, 12; cfr. Matt. x, 17).

The storm rages against Christ and His holy Church. But its first victims are ever the leaders: popes, bishops, priests. "Slay the shepherds and the sheep will disperse." This is the formula which is constantly followed.

2. In the dark recesses of the catacombs the venerable head of the Church is surrounded by his priests, deacons, and the faithful laity, who look up to the Pope as their father and protector. Suddenly a mob led by a traitor fills the hidden passageways. Ominously flickering torches appear in the dark aisles. The Pope is seized, chained, and dragged to his death. He dies as did his Divine Master;—such was the fate of the first thirty popes;—but the Church does not die. The same scenes are enacted in the provinces. An Ignatius, a Polycarp, and a Eusebius joyfully bear the shackles of their Lord and Master.

There follows the tragic period of the Arian Valerians, of the Julians, of the Iconoclasts of Byzantium, of Anastasius, Chysostom, Damascene, etc., who submit to violence. And thus persecution continues to Thomas á Becket, Gregory VII, Pius VI, and Pius VII.

The Corsican lays the aged Pope in shackles, thinking that he can subdue him. Quietly, calmly, but with adamantine determination the vice-gerent of Christ stands before the mighty conqueror. Then dawns the nineteenth century, with its violent attacks upon the freedom of the Church, its persecutions and proscriptions in all countries.

But the bishops of the Kulturkampf era, as well as the confessor bishops in Tonkin, China, Corea, show themselves worthy of their great predecessors.

"If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." Every detail is re-enacted: The hatred and ferocity of the enemy, the stirring up of religious fanaticism among the people, the rage of impotency, the secret counsels, the offer of the traitor, the levy of soldiers and police, the surprise attack at night, the arrest and shackling of the prisoner,—all these things are again and again repeated.

The Divine Master embodied this feature in His programme of suffering in order to leave to all future ages a model of conduct for His followers and His priests.

The example of the Lord has worked wonders and created incomparable types of courageous confessors of the faith.

XXXI. THE FLIGHT OF THE DISCIPLES

I. The Disciples Fled

Then was fulfilled what the Master had prophesied: "Behold the hour cometh, and it is now come, that you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." (John xvi, 32).

They did not believe it at that time; they could not understand it. But now it becomes a fact: "the disciples all leaving him, fled." (Matt. xxvi, 56).

Their fault lay not in this that they sought safety, for this was the express wish and command of the Master; but this flight gave rise to something else, something sad and painful.

II. They Were Scandalized in Him

"You will all this night be scandalized in me; for it is written: I will strike the shepherd and disperse the flock." (John xviii, 1).

1. They were scandalized in Him, that is, confused, troubled, and disheartened, by the unexpected course of events, they allowed themselves to become shaky in their faith and to regard Christ and His holy cause as lost. The capture of the Master appears to them as a sign of helplessness. Anxiety, fear, doubt, descend like a dark, dank cloud upon their souls.

This is the *scandalum crucis,* upon which so many disciples of Christ, during His lifetime in the years to come, were to suffer shipwreck.

2. O Priest of God! Have there not been days and

hours in your sacerdotal life when, like the disciples, you were disheartened, disgusted, and about to desert your Lord and Master, at least in thought and mood? —*"Fugit a Christo quicumque propter timorem humanum vel passionum tentationem peccat."* (Ludolfus).

3. And if at times you have similar experiences, if your friends become unfaithful to you, recall the Master and do not forget that He never ceased to love His disciples, received them back into His favor, and, in spite of their infidelity, forgave them everything,

III. Desertion and Apostasy in the History of the Church

Severe afflictions and persecutions follow in the path of the Church. Anti-Christian governments have determined upon her destruction; hostile mobs break into her sanctuaries, lay hand upon her bishops and priests, close her schools and institutions. This is but a repetition of the mystery of weakness and impotency in the Garden of Olives. Christ is again taken captive and led away. Thousands upon thousands have borne themselves heroically in such persecutions and remained faithful to Him. But invariably there is also a great horde of weaklings, *lapsi, libellatici, sacrificati, thurificati,* etc., to mention but a few of the many forms of open and veiled apostasy. How tragically this weakneses appeared, for example, in the persecution under Decius (cfr. Eusebius, H. E., IV, 41; VIII), at the time of the English martyrs, and in the German Kulturkampf. Unfortunately the comment: "and many

disciples deserted Him and fled" invariably accompanies the record of the heroism of Christ's faithful adherents.

And among the deserters, sad to say, there are nearly always some priests, nay even bishops, who follow in the footsteps of Judas or Peter by betraying or denying the Lord. Poor deserted Saviour! How often art Thou abandoned!

XXXII. "THIS VERY NIGHT"

1. Not without a purpose are these words emphasized. "This very night you will be scandalized in me," that is to say, but a few hours after the incomparable events of the Last Supper, only a few hours after First Holy Communion, after ordination, after a most unusual discourse, after receiving impressions that seemed indelible. In fact the Apostles had been in closer and more intimate relationship with the Master at this evening banquet than ever before. He forged a bond of love and fidelity between Himself and them which no earthly power seemed capable of ever disrupting. Such was their own firm conviction, to which they gave heart-felt expression. "Never shall we desert Thee, even though we must die with Thee." And now they desert Him at the first severe test!

They were not as yet strong and tried souls like him who said: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. viii, 35). They were but novices of weak and wavering virtue.

2. Is it not similar in the life of a priest? How

many intimate hours of communion has many a priest enjoyed with the Master, hours of sweet intimacy, full of hope and solemn, honest assurances of fidelity. And then,—perhaps but a few hours later,—he displays a miserable weakness, even to flight, to denial, and to formal betrayal! Thomas à Kempis puts it thus: "Many love Jesus as long as they meet with no adversity, many praise and bless Him as long as they receive consolations from Him. But if Jesus hide Himself and leave them for a little while, they fall either into complaining or excessive dejection." (*Imit. Christi,* II, xi, 1).

3. And yet, in spite of His prevision of all these weaknesses and infidelities, the Master withheld nothing from His disciples, but gave them all He had,—namely, His love, the Holy Eucharist, ordination, everything.

He reckoned in advance with human weakness and received it as a factor into all His calculations. But He includes in His reckoning also one other important factor, namely, His own fidelity and love, which remains ever constant and unchanged as the "eternal light" before the tabernacle continues to shine even after all have departed.

XXXIII. THE BELOVED DISCIPLE IN FLIGHT

1. Beyond doubt even that disciple "whom Jesus loved" in a particular manner, who had rested upon His breast at the Last Supper, was among those who took to flight, for the Evangelist says: "Then the

disciples *all* leaving Him, fled." (Matt. xxvi. 56). St. John, too, heard the accusation: "Can you not watch one hour with me?" He, too, most beloved by the Master, thus *temporarily* deserted Him in a moment of weakness. "You will this night be scandalized in me." (John xviii. 1). Thus not a single one of the whole chosen group of the first Apostles and priests fully stood the test: this is a tragic and heart-rending fact.

2. But while Peter,[1] all too bold and audacious, succumbs to the danger, and the remaining Apostles completely disappear from the scene during these days of suffering, John alone returns to the Master's side and remains to the end. He, the youngest, saves the honor of the Apostolic College and proves himself the truest of the Twelve.

3. How can this fact be accounted for?

(a) We know of but one explanation which completely satisfies. It is the particularly intimate relationship in which John stood to the Mother of Christ. She probably lingered in Bethania, and John hastened to her side immediately after the soul-stirring events on the Mount of Olives, to inform her of what had happened. And it is she who by her courageous faith and tested love encourages and restores him. This is the reason why John henceforward appears as the inseparable companion of the Blessed Mother and walks

[1] The other disciple who presses forward into the Palace of the High Priest, is not John, but one of the more prominent Jewish disciples, perhaps Nicodemus ("*notus summo pontifici*") or Joseph of Arimathea.

with her upon the first Way of the Cross, to the heights of Calvary.

(b) To the Mother of Sorrows the priest of God, too, should have recourse in dangers and tribulations. *"Ita Mater, istud agas, crucifixi fige plagas, cordi meo valide."*

XXXIV. THE SORROWFUL TRIDUUM OF THE ELEVEN

1. A more sorrowful triduum, three more harrowing days than those which the other eleven Apostles experienced, have never been lived through by any mortal. Thus was fulfilled in its entire bitterness the prophecy of the Master: "Amen, amen I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice." (John xvi, 20). To the eleven faithful disciples it seemed as if the sun had set for ever and it had become night without a single star to light up the darkness. *"Tunc omnes discipuli peccaverunt et in fide per illud triduum exstincti fuerunt praeter Beatam Mariam Matrem, in qua sola fides ecclesiae inconcussa permansit."* (Ludolfus).

According to the same Ludolfus and other liturgical commentators this is the mystical and figurative sense of that stirring ceremony in Holy Week, when after each twelfth of the matins, one of the twelve candles is extinguished, with the exception of the highest in the center, which typifies the Blessed Virgin, who alone remains to illumine the darkness.

2. Extinguished candles! Is there a more sorrow-

ful symbol of souls who are deeply dejected, without light or warmth? That is the state of the wretched disciples in their mad flight. Sadly they recall the days of the past when they were so happy in the company of their Master! But the past dissolves itself like a fog, while the future lies before them dark and hopeless. Whither shall they turn? What shall they do? What does the future hold for them? "I shall destroy the shepherd, and the sheep shall be dispersed." Poor, wretched, dispersed flock! Sorrow, fear, doubt, restlessness, longing, form a swirling chaos (cfr. Mark xvi, 10). Only he who tries to feel as the Eleven did in their plight, can fully understand the words of the Easter report: "The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord again."

3. And now, O Priest of God, recall certain times and hours of your own past life. Have you not also experienced bitter days of suffering? Days when the Master was far away from you and you from him; when you began to lose faith in your God, your Saviour, your Church, your priestly office? Sorrowful days, without a ray of hope, cold as an extinguished candle!

Oh, what art thou when thou hast lost Him, thy Master, when thou strayest about without Him!

"What can the world profit thee without Jesus? To be without Him is a grievous hell, and to be with Him, a sweet paradise." (*Imit.* ii, 8, 2).

V. BEFORE THE ECCLESIASTICAL COURT

XXXV. CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS

"And they led him away, to Annas first." (John xviii, 13).

1. *Jesus led before Annas.* Was Annas in fact, as he appears to have been, the soul of the movement against Christ? If so, it was natural to lead the captive immediately into his presence. Perhaps Annas had expressed a desire that this should be done, or the Jews thought that it might give him pleasure.

Behold how the eyes of the old intriguer sparkle! Before him stands the hated Galilean, as a malefactor in bonds, surrounded by the rabble, who surge forward and push the helpless victim before them, as if to say: "Here He is!"

2. *The Examination.* "The high priest asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine." (John xviii, 19).

(a) *The question concerning the disciples.* Undoubtedly it had been the intention to capture the Apostles with their Master. But this plan had miscarried, and as we have seen, the Master Himself had

which we are living. This pagan régime, sometimes called Capitalism, is inimical to every social good. It prostitutes our press and literature, commercializes education, makes the poor poorer and the rich richer and, finally, injects injustice into every vein of our social anatomy, so that a healthy body politic is impossible.

Every true priest of God may well stop to take inventory of his activities against this plague. Are not all other efforts, in some sense, futile, so long as our few good works are being daily swallowed up in a sea of social injustice?

This means a daily battle, not only to keep oneself from suffocation in this miasmatic atmosphere, but to give aid in a united effort to remove the causes of this malodorous thing. It means study, education, and conscientious leadership.

"Fratres, sobrii estote et vigilate, quia adversarius vester diabolus circuit" . . . thus the Church sounds her warning daily in the Breviary. Let us be up and doing, lest the enemy of our God and country overwhelm us.

2. *After.*—And then there is the battle after the cockle has appeared. The divine norm, in this regard, is based on the principle of the recognition of the freedom of the human will. Every effort must be made to lead this blind faculty in man. But the will remains free to choose good or evil under the false appearance of good. Compulsion is impossible with the will of man. Thus it is that we have ever to face the baffling and almost contradictory problem of evil.

"Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?"

"No," comes the answer, "lest, perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat together with it."

There is undoubtedly a satisfaction in imagining the western world to be wholly and undivided under the banner of Christ, in picturing the Catholic Church as the sole agent in heathen lands, in imagining our own surroundings given over to the life of the just.

"Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?"

There have been times in the history of the Church, when her warriors did not stop to ask questions, but in unreasoned haste went forth to conquer whole peoples by force and place them under Christ's sway. But to what good? Passing over a few isolated instances of divine sanction for the principle of force, history is eloquent in her testimony to the evils that follow the use of force in matters of religion. This is true, too, in the limited circles of the parish and the diocese. An intelligent and well directed programme of reform is far more effective than wild outbursts of an unregulated zeal.

51. *The Treasure of the Householder—Library and Study*

"Therefore every scribe instructed in the kingdom of Heaven, is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old." (Matt. xiii, 52.)

the High Priest feel uneasy. He does not rejoice in his triumph, and sees himself condemned to silence in the presence of such moral greatness. Perhaps the despicable coward who struck Jesus did so to help Annas out of his predicament.

II. The act itself was revoltingly brutal. One need only to read the description of the incident to be aroused to anger and to wish that a thunderbolt would strike the cowardly servant or that the earth would open and swallow him.

Although the Master endured worse things than this blow, there is something particularly revolting about this insult. What could be worse for a priest or a bishop than to be struck in the face in a public assemblage?

III. The Saviour's attitude.

1. Every priest, particularly if he is of a high-strung disposition, knows how furious one can become in the face of such brutality. Hot waves of anger surge over the countenance; the temples quaver, the lips tremble, the heart beats vigorously, and every fiber is at highest tension. How difficult in such a moment to retain that complete self-control which the priestly calling demands!

Hence the example of the Master is here of peculiar significance: "Do as I did."

2. What does He do? What does He not do?

(a) In the first place it should be noted, in opposition to a certain one-sided ascetical interpretation, that the humility of the Master did not manifest itself in helpless silence and acquiescence. Such an attitude would

only provoke disdain and prove prejudicial to the clerical state. The priest must be ever mindful that He represents the entire clergy as well as the Church at large. Hence the humility of impotent weakness is not the humility of the Master.

(b) He does not accept the offensive insult in silence, but repels it as an unjust attack. It was the High Priest's duty to rebuke this brutal act, and Christ's words imply an admonition of this duty.

(c) He answers, ——— not in anger, not with the flaming passion of the Prophet Elias, but quietly, calmly, in measured words. He does not complain of the insult offered to His Person, but rejects the excuse with which the venal hypocrite would justify his act: "Answerest thou the high priest thus?" This question was meant to imply that Christ refused to treat the High Priest with becoming respect. This charge He who makes respect of authority, even when vested in unworthy individuals, a matter of duty ("On the chair of Moses sat" . . . Matt. xxiii, 2), could not allow to go unanswered. Calmly He replies with the blood streaming from His lips: "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou me?" (John xviii, 23).

(d) The Master does not present the other cheek. This conduct apparently contradicts His teaching: "If one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other." (Matt. v, 39). Christ's teachings must not be interpreted slavishly according to the letter, but rather, as St. Augustine points out, according to His conduct.

The utterance quoted (a proverbial saying) manifests complete willingness to accept the most bitter injustice in silence when and where the glory of God demands it.

Soon after, when the Master is made the target of abuse at the hands of the rabble in the house of the High Priest, He is silent and without a murmur presents the other cheek, and more than that. But here, before Annas, He shows that He suffers voluntarily. His meek yet determined and majestic retort is more effective than a speechless turning of the other cheek, which would only be interpreted as impotence.

(e) Hence there are occasions when a protest against unjust violence is more useful and appropriate than speechless acquiescence. The Apostle of the Gentiles followed the Master in this, as did many other great confessors of the faith.

A ray of the majesty and dignity of our Lord shines in their countenance, an echo of His word resounds upon their lips. "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil." Only after uttering a protest do they follow the Master silently into shame and death.

IV. What a lesson there is in all this for the priest, particularly in times when the fires of hatred burn fiercely against the Church and the priesthood. He must never lose his composure and dignity. He must show no signs of passion, make no angry retort, even though the incitement be strong. He may, however, say with His Master: "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; . . . why strikest thou me?"

V. "Why strikest thou me?"—"Haec interrogatio nostra est confusio," remarks Ludolfus. If the priest handles the Body of Christ irreverently at the altar, if he touches it with brutal, guilt-stained hands, is that not as a blow in His sacred countenance? "Why strikest thou me?" comes forth the quiet yet accusing voice from the tabernacle. "What have I done to deserve this?"

XXXVII. THE PALACE OF THE HIGH PRIEST

1. The scene of the following painful and in part revolting events—and this must not be overlooked—is the house or residence of a priest or bishop, the palace of the Jewish High Priest.

The office of High Priest, conferred by God Himself upon Aaron, since the glorious times of the Machabees had become more and more secularized and under the Roman régime was regarded as a political job which was given to the highest bidder or to a favorite without thought of qualification or worthiness. The right spirit had long since departed from the office, but the exterior sheen remained, and for that reason this high position became a bone of contention between ambitious families and parties. Simony, nepotism, intrigues, voluptuousness, and vanity stalked about in the palace of the High Priest and from there spread as a poison through the whole ecclesiastical life of the Jews.

Here, in the palace of the High Priest, were held all those deliberations which aimed at the forcible apprehension of the hated Nazarene; here was the rendez-

vous of the spies sent out against Him; here but a short while ago took place the vile bargaining with the traitor, and here, in the principal hall of the palace, was inaugurated the most terrible judicial murder which history records.

And all this in an ecclesiastical edifice!

2. There arise before our eyes similar scenes in the history of the Christian Church. They happened in those sad times when the episcopal dignity became the prey of rival families; in those dark days when a Pope like the pontiffs of the Othonic period or of the type of Alexander the Sixth inhabited the palace of the High Priest in Rome.

What could not the remaining ecclesiastical palaces on the Thames, on the Seine, on the Rhine, on the Bosporus and elsewhere tell of incredible worldliness among the highest ecclesiastics, of disgusting scenes of immorality, of the most shocking abuse of sacred powers! Oh, the sufferings of Christ are repeated over and over again in the history of the Church and of mankind!

XXXVIII. THE HIGH COURT

"They led Him to Caiphas the high priest, where the scribes and the ancients were assembled." (Matt. xxvi, 57).

This is the highest ecclesiastical court of the ancient Israelitic church. At its head stands

1. *Caiphas.* He sits on his throne garbed in robes of splendor. In comparison with the quiet, industrious Annas, Caiphas appears as the soul of the whole con-

spiracy,—a proud, despotic, and passionate man, who carried through with relentless energy whatever he undertook. He is the type of the thoroughly worldly prelate who has insinuated himself into the sacred calling without a vocation, owes his office entirely to his high family connections, derives from it power, honor, and a rich revenue, but is a priest only in name.

Prelates of this sort instinctively hate every zealous reformer and every attempted reform, because it may become dangerous to their position, their privileges, their income, and their luxurious life. *"Quieta non movere,"* is their political maxim.

And this unworthy incumbent of the high-priestly office sits there in the hypocritical pose of a protector and an avenger of the divine law.

2. *The College of the Judges.* Grouped about Caiphas sit the judges of the court, among whom, at that time, were five sons of Annas. In the first row were the *priests,* in the second, the *scribes* (*i.e.,* Bible scholars). Among them were men of wide renown, *e.g.,* Gamaliel, the grandson of the illustrious Hillel, Onkelos, Rabbi Zadoc, and others. But the reputation of the new teacher had overshadowed that of the scholars, had aroused envy and jealousy amongst them, and made them deadly enemies of Jesus.

A third group embraces the *Elders,* that is, laymen who were prominent either by wealth, birth, or influence. Among these was Ben Calba Schebua, the Rothschild of the Jerusalem of that day. Two others are better known to us, Nicodemus, the councillor, and Joseph of Arimathea, "a good and a just man," who

"had not consented to their counsel and doings." (Luke xxiii, 50 sq.). Two noble men were they, two who alone were worthy of the name of judge.

3. These, then, were the judges before whom the Divine Master was to appear. And He? He recognizes them as the legitimate and proper authority, just as, in later centuries, His confessors recognized the tribunals of the Roman Caesars and the Japanese Shoguns. He knows, and they know through Him, that these courts, in spite of their questionable membership and methods of procedure, were instruments in the hands of Providence.

4. There is no worse fanaticism than that born from religious antagonisms and jealousies. This is plainly apparent not only in the life of Christ, but also in the history of the Church. Everywhere, in the Byzantium of the 9th to the 15th century, and in the England of the 16th and 17th centuries, under Henry VIII and the "Virgin" Queen Elizabeth, the most deadly enemy of the Christian Church is Caesaropapism, State absolutism interfering with religion.

Every means is welcome, provided only that it serves to destroy the only true Church of Christ. Her enemies hire traitors, organize mobs, which are led by apostates, pounce upon their victims in the dark of night and in sacred places, seek to enlist the political power by misrepresenting her as a danger to the State, arouse the rabble and threaten disaster if the civic rulers do not stand ready at all times to enforce their bloody sentences.

"They will persecute you as they persecuted me."

5. Hurrying messengers have reported the capture of our Lord to the inmates of the palace. They breathe more lightly now. The *coup* was successful. Joy spreads through the illuminated halls, and in feverish anticipation, they await the arrival of the hated Nazarene. All eyes are turned toward the entrance. The door opens, and Christ enters, led by His captors. The eyes of his enemies light up with fiendish glee. "Ah, we have Him at last!"

XXXIX. THE FALSE WITNESSES

"The chief priests and the whole council sought false witnesses against Jesus, that they might put Him to death: and they found not, whereas many false witnesses had come in." (Matt. xxvi, 59 sq.).

I. The Choice of Witnesses

1. It was necessary to have witnesses. The law demanded them. "By the mouth of two or three witnesses shall he die that is to be slain." (Deut. xvii, 6). It is the first duty of a just judge to examine the witnesses and to admit only those who are worthy of credence; but in this instance it has been written that "the chief priests *sought* false witnesses." The entire procedure had no other purpose than to veil an unheard-of judiciary murder by the appearance of a perfectly legal procedure.

2. The very fact that the enemies of Christ sought *false* witnesses shows that they had given up the effort

to prove Him guilty. "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" (John viii, 46). They are unable to convict Him and therefore have recourse to perjury and falsehood.

3. The enemies of Christ and of His Church have never failed to gather about them despicable creatures who for gold or venal favors were ready to give false evidence, produce forged documents, and perjure themselves to attain their purpose. The history of St. Athanasius and St. Gregory VII, the incredible blood trials under Henry VIII and the "Virgin Queen" of England are classical examples of this.

4. Every just court admits witnesses both for and against the defense. Not so in the trial of Jesus. Were there witnesses in His favor? "I have taught publicly; question those who have listened to me," the Master said to Annas. Why, then, were not His witnesses called, the blind and the lame whom He had healed, the dead whom He had brought back to life, all the many thousands who had listened to His teachings, witnessed His miracles, and joyfully exclaimed: "He hath made all things well." But the gentlemen of the high court do not desire the truth; they seek only His death, no matter what the price.

II. The Failure of the Witnesses

1. It soon becomes apparent how difficult it is to proceed in this manner against the unassailable character of our Lord. *"Adeo munda fuit vita Iesu et omnino irreprehensibilis."* (Ludolfus). "For it was fitting

that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher [*i.e.,* more pure] than the heavens [*i.e.,* angels]." (Hebr. vii, 26).

Would that it were so every time a priest is brought up for trial!

2. There were "*many* false witnesses." (Matt. xxvi, 60). His enemies hoped that thus it would be possible to present at least some incriminating evidence. But the large number of false witnesses has precisely the opposite effect. It led to contradictions and recriminations and finally to a veritable babel of confusion.

3. Finally there are found two witnesses (the minimum number necessary according to law) whose depositions present something tangible. They reported His mysterious prediction: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John ii, 19). This utterance could at least be interpreted as indicating a lack of reverence for the Temple and as blasphemy. But these two witnesses contradicted each other, which made their evidence worthless. (Numb. xxxv, 30; Deut. xvii, 6). (That the members of the high court knew just what these words meant, is shown in their subsequent demand for guards at the grave, which they based on this utterance of our Lord.)

Thus the last remnant of tangible evidence disappears, and Caiphas shouts angrily: "Answerest thou nothing?" (Matt. xxvi, 62). Jesus remains silent and this noble, solemn silence is more eloquent than words.

III. The Coup de Théatre

Caiphas becomes uneasy. What will all this lead to? Pale with anger and excitement he jumps from his seat and joins the crowd. A *coup de théatre* is to save the day. Since the evidence is inadequate, the Defendant shall incriminate Himself. On a previous occasion they had said to Him: "Thou givest testimony of thyself; thy testimony is not true." (John viii, 13; cfr. xv, 31). Now they urgently need the testimony He gave of Himself. And He does not withhold it. *"Oblatus est, quia ipse voluit."* "Although I give testimony of myself, my testimony is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go: but you know not whence I come, or whither I go." (John viii, 14).

XL. THE GREAT QUESTION AND ITS ANSWER

I. The Great Question

"Art thou the Christ, the Son of the blessed God?" (Mark xiv, 61).

1. Caiphas rightly judged that the mass of the people, though they saw in Jesus a great prophet and reverenced Him as a worker of miracles, yet neither understood nor acknowledged His divine nature and equality with the God of Israel. Here, therefore, was the possibility of finding a colorable reason for condemning Him.

2. Caiphas asks the question in his capacity of High Priest, that is, as the representative of Yahwe, as the supreme head of the church and the people of Israel. He does it in the most solemn manner, adjuring Jesus in the name of God, the Most High, to tell the whole truth. He chooses his words so that evasion is impossible and a purely figurative interpretation of the divine sonship is excluded. "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ" (Matt. xxvi, 63), "the son of the blessed God?" (Mark xiv, 61; cfr. Gen. xxiv, 3).

There is absolute silence in the hall. A hundred glowing eyes are turned expectantly upon the Saviour. A great and solemn moment has arrived.

II. The Great Answer

"I am." (Mark xiv, 62).

1. Without a moment's hesitation Jesus answers,—calmly, clearly, unmistakably: "Yes, I am the Christ, the Son of God." Brutal acts of violence and fetters are unable to prejudice the unapproachable majesty of the Lord. The diadem of the Divinity shines forth upon His brow also in the hour of weakness, the glory of the Godhead illumines His countenance. *"I am."*

2. And then, to remove the last vestige of doubt concerning the exact meaning of His words, He summons the High Priest and the entire council before His eternal court: "And you shall see the Son of God sitting at the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven"; that is, while He

now appears before them in the form of a servant, they may exult in the thought that they have triumphed over Him. This is *"their* hour." But *His* day will come, *"His* hour," when He will appear before them in the unveiled glory of His Divinity, as judge of the world, and then the question: "Art thou the Christ, the son of the living God?" will receive its definitive answer.

III. "Art Thou a Christian?"

In later centuries, before the Roman prætors and the Japanese Shoguns, the question takes this form: "Art thou a Christian?" And the judgment in case of an affirmative answer is predetermined: for to be a Christian means to be destined to die. Hundreds of thousands declare like their divine Master firmly and clearly: "I am," and go to their death, with Him and for Him.

Art thou a Catholic? Thus the English courts under Henry VIII and Elizabeth question those who are haled before them. An affirmative answer means a death sentence. But without a moment's hesitation Thomas More, John Fisher, and thousands of others joyfully proclaimed "I am" and eagerly ascended the scaffold.

Like the Master, His faithful confessors earnestly and solemnly point to the future judgment: "Take a good look at us, so that you may recognize us on the day of judgment." (*Passio S. Perpetuae*).

XLI. THE SENTENCE

1. Caiphas feigns horror and theatrically rends his tunic. *"Then the high priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemer: what think you? But they answering, said: He is guilty of death."* (Matt. xxvi, 65 sq.).

(a) What a strange judgment! "He hath blasphemed";—surely not, unless He is not what He so solemnly declares Himself to be. But if He is what He claims to be, then Caiphas must descend from his throne and lay his ephod at the feet of the Son of God; then must all the priests and scribes and ancients, and with them the whole people, fall on their knees and worship Him as the Divine King of Israel.

Is it possible that His claim to this title has no foundation? Does He lack holiness? "Who of you can accuse me of sin?" They are unable to do so, and hence must have recourse to falsehoods. Or does He lack the royal seal of miracles? They themselves admit: "This man performs many wonders," that is, divine signs and works. Or are the prophesies not fulfilled in Him? He can calmly call upon them in His favor. Everything points to their fulfillment in Him; even the last of the prophets, John the Baptist, appears as a witness to His Divinity. But as *"Non serviam!"* was the defiant utterance of the proud Lucifer, these "sons of Satan," too, exclaim: *"Non serviam nos!"*

Every title and claim of the divinely-sent Messias is contemptuously set aside with the statement: "He hath blasphemed."

(b) But Caiphas rejoices in this outcome. Not without anxiety had he proposed the decisive question. How often had Jesus parried the most tricky questions by an unexpected counter-query. What if He were to use similar tactics now? But no. Clearly and without reservation He gives just the answer which the High Priest desired. Breathing deeply, audibly, Caiphas cries out: "Have you heard this? What further need have we of witnesses?" . . . He has attained his purpose completely.

2. O Holy Church of God! When you, too, are condemned, when your titles and claims to a divine origin and a supernatural mission are questioned, disregarded, and denied by the proud high priests of modern infidelity, console yourself. It is nothing compared with the outrageous procedure of Caiphas and his council.

XLII. THE BATTLE FOR THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

"Art thou the Christ, the Son of the living God?" (Mark xiv, 61).

1. This has remained the great and decisive question that divides mankind, from the days of the Ebionites and the Arians to our own time. About this truth the battle still rages. Not the one or the other subsidiary dogma is the bone of contention: the attack is directed against the foundation of Christian belief, the Divinity

of Christ, and with this truth Christianity stands or falls.

2. True, no man can be impervious to the magnetism of the wonderful personality of Christ. Even the unbeliever and the rationalist stand overpowered before this greatest of all figures in the world's history. They are compelled to concede to Jesus Christ a place apart. They speak of Him as the wisest of the wise, as the incomparable, noblest, and holiest of all men who have ever lived, to whom mankind is indebted in eternal admiration and gratitude.

But all such words in the mouths of modern Pharisees and Sadducees are but rank hypocrisy, designed to veil their sacrilegious plans; for while they speak thus, they stretch forth their hands to rob Jesus Christ of the diadem of His divinity.

3. What is the value of a thousand naughts? Nothing. Naughts remain naughts, though they be piled up indefinitely. But if you place a *one* before them, they signify an incalculable quantity. This *one* before a row of naughts is the *Divinity of Christ.* Through it everything in Christ receives value and greatness.

And first of all His *teachings.* I can regard them as beautiful, pure, noble, incomparable. But are they *true?* Are they uniquely true? Must I accept them? If Christ is a mere man, a philosopher, an idealized Socrates or Confucius, then I may accept His teachings if I will; I may attach myself to His school if it suits me; I may question His doctrines and choose some of them in preference to others. But if He is God, then He is the eternal Truth, and I must believe

His every word, even though He teach things which I am unable to understand; then may I believe with unconditional confidence.

If He is God, then *His law* is the highest, decisive norm, and I must subject myself to it, even though it sets painful bounds to my avarice, my sensuality, and my proud wilfulness. There must be an end to all doubts and misgivings. "He who believes not is already judged."

If Christ is a mere man, then all *His threats* are purely human and reach no farther than a man's short arm. But if He is God, I must tremble before His threats, which will be verified in me with infallible certainty, unless I do penance and petition Him for mercy. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away!"

The same rule applies to the *promises of Christ.* If He is a mere man, it were foolish to expect too much, for disappointment would be sure to follow. But if He is God, the eternal Truth, then no sacrifice and no effort to become worthy of His promises is too great. Then His promises shine forth as the bright star in a dark night, and I may hope and trust even against hope. *"Scio, cui credidi."*

His external appearance. If Christ is a mere man, His appearance is but a human ideal, nothing more. But if He is God, the incarnate eternal Word, then we behold in Him the most wonderful manifestation of God to the world, then "the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared." (Tit. iii, 4).

His example,—how differently will it affect me and challenge imitation if this Infant in the poor stable is a Divine Infant, if this Carpenter in Nazareth is the Son of God, if He who says to me: "I have given you an example, that you may do as I have done," is the eternal and absolute model of all perfection.

His Suffering. If the man who is nailed to the Cross is a mere man, then we have witnessed a purely human judicial murder, which I must condemn as severely as I condemn the execution of Louis XVI. I will leave the place of execution in a tragic mood and lay a wreath upon the resting-place of this noble hero.

But if He is the God-man, the true Son of God, then I stand before a mystery that convulses Heaven and earth, in the light of which the tremendous dogmas of the fall of man, of eternal justice, and of the unspeakable mercy of God shine with wonderful brilliancy. If Christ is not God, then Christianity with its unique history of twenty centuries, with all its incomparable blessings and successes, is a monumental deception. It were folly to think so even for one moment!

If Christ is God, then all is plain and clear. Then are His teachings true, the whole, full and entire truth; then is His way infallibly right; then to seek, find, and love Him means to seek, find, and love God; then to be with Him means to be with God, to rest upon His Heart means to rest upon the Heart of God.

Thus the question: "Who Art Thou?" is the most important, the most decisive, and the most solemn recognition that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the

blessed God," the cornerstone of our faith, hope, and love.

XLIII. THE NIGHT OF SORROW

"But they answering said: He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others struck his face with the palms of their hands . . ." (Matt. xxvi, 66 sq.).

I. "Into the Hands of the Wicked" (Job xvi, 12)

1. From the context of both St. Matthew's and St. Mark's Gospel it appears that several of the members of the high court took part in these unworthy actions. The Master had so frequently shamed and exposed them that they gladly wreak vengeance on Him now.

2. Then the gathering dispersed and our Lord was left to the brutal soldiers and servants.

Encouraged by the example of those exalted gentlemen, the rabble, too, vents its spite upon Him. The more elevated and the more noble the victim that falls into the hands of the rabble, the more heinously they gloat over his misfortune. What did not Louis XVI and his noble family have to endure at the hands of the Sansculottes!

3. This is the saddest night which ever descended upon the earth and a believing Christian can review its horrors only in deepest sorrow.

II. "Heaped With Indignities"

1. "They spit in his face." (Matt. xxvi, 67). To spit a person in the face among the Jews, as indeed among all races, was a mark of the deepest disdain. (Cfr. Numb. xii, 14; Deut. xxv, 9; Job xxxix, 10). It is an expression of utter contempt, a weapon of the crudest and most savage passion, impotent fury, contemptible revenge. The mere thought of this Sacred Countenance being thus vilely defiled, drives the blood to one's cheeks.

2. "And they blindfolded him, and smote his face. And they asked him, saying: Prophesy, who is it that struck thee?" (Luke xxii, 64). Thus they mock His prophetical dignity and his omniscience. Others, more brutal, lay hands upon Him, strike Him in the neck and on the mouth, causing the blood to flow. He has become the plaything of a maddened rabble. He, the Son of God, the eternal High Priest, the Teacher of the world, the holiest, most amiable, most innocent Saviour, my Lord and Master. *"Cor Iesu, opprobriis saturatum, miserere mei!"*

III. The Echo of These Scenes

1. *In the Holy Eucharist.* It was the apparent impotence of our Lord which made the rabble so bold and audacious. Likewise it is the apparent impotence of the Saviour hidden under the sacramental veil which brings similar disparagement upon Him.

"Adoro te devote, latens Deitas,
Quae sub his figuris vere latitas."

2. In all its tragic details this scene of derision and contempt is repeated year after year in the mad excesses of the Carnival, when even Christians lower themselves almost to the level of beasts and revile the most sacred things.

3. And do not *infidel exegetists* and *modern romancers* writing on the life of Jesus spit into His sacred face when they drag down Himself, His life, and His love into the filth of the gutter?

IV. The Expiation

It is a beautiful and touching characteristic of the Catholic Church that she not only commemorates the suffering and humiliation of the Lord sympathetically once a year, but seeks to give Him satisfaction for His Passion.

1. From the rapt meditation of these scenes there has arisen, as a sweet smelling rose from a bunch of thorns, the *devotion to the Holy Face,* by which good Catholics piously strive to make satisfaction for the humiliations suffered by Christ.

2. The repetition of those horrors during the Carnival season led to the introduction of the *Forty Hours* and other expiatory devotions.

3. How pious souls participate in Christ's sufferings by devoutly meditating on them, Ludolfus, among others, points out to us. He descends in spirit into the underground prison to which the Master was com-

mitted according to pious tradition, and crawls up as closely to His Heart as possible. *"Et tunc devotissime osculaberis manus et pedes eius venerabiles et vincula illa durissima et sedebis ibi ad pedes illius dolens et lugens et dices: O Domine Jesu, saltem requiescat caput tuum super humerum meum, ex quo* [*quia*] *te liberare non possum. . . . Et sic ad pedes eius beatissimos aliquantulum dormitabis et quiesces, si tamen dormire potes in tali statu Dominum tuum videns."*—This means in very fact, *compati cum Christo Domino* in a true Catholic sense.

XLIV. THE NEXT MORNING

(Matt. xxvii, 1; Luke xxii, 66 sq.)

1. The High Court may have felt that the informal nocturnal "robber synod" was not sufficient. It was legally invalid for this reason, if for none other, that a criminal trial could not be held at night and because at least one day must intervene between the trial and the judgment according to Jewish law. Since a new day began with the break of dawn, and the Jews counted parts of a day as full days, these conditions could be complied with at least *pro forma.* So the Sanhedrin reassembled, with a full quorum this time ("all"; Matt. xxvii, 1), in the *Lischkath ha-gasith,* the official courtroom on the southwest side of the Temple.

There was need of haste in order to place the people before a *fait accompli.* The sudden announcement that the Nazarene had been convicted before the highest

court in Israel sitting in solemn session, was calculated to act as a thunder-bolt and seemed the best way to prevent an insurrection, particularly if, as was hoped, the Roman judge would show himself willing.

How often has not the same story repeated itself in the history of the Church! How many such "robber synods" were hurriedly convoked in order to strike a quick blow at Pope and Church.

2. This time no witnesses were called. It was thought that a repetition of Christ's own testimony before the whole court would serve a better purpose. They knew that they could depend on His fidelity to His mission. And so the question is again asked: "If Thou art the Christ, then tell us."

Strange question! Thus spoke the followers of those who, years before, when questioned by Herod's murderers concerning the birth-place of the Messias, laid their finger without hesitation on the passage in Micheas (Matt. ii, 5 sq.; Mich. v, 5). These men were in a position to know who that Child in Bethlehem was; they knew for certain that the time had been fulfilled, that all signs pointed to Him who stood before them, that this Man had for three years shone as a new sun on the firmament of Israel and had thrown into the shade all the wonderful events in which their history was so rich. All this they know. "You both know me," Jesus had but recently told them in the Temple, "and you know whence I am: and I am not come of myself; but he that sent me, is true, whom you know not. I know him, because I am from him and he hath sent me." What had been their answer?

"They sought therefore to apprehend him: and no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come." (John vii, 28–30). But now His hour has come, and the Lord no longer evades it. Calmly and clearly He reiterates His previous declaration:

"And He saith to them: If I shall tell you, you will not believe me. And if I shall also ask you, you will not answer me, nor let me go. But hereafter the Son of God shall be sitting on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all: Art thou then the Son of God? Who said: You say that I am. And they said: What need we any further testimony? for we ourselves have heard it from his own mouth." (Luke xxii, 67 sqq.).

3. The Master had just emerged from a tragic night filled with dark mysteries of unheard-of suffering and cruelty. But all this had not broken Him. As the sun from a cloud, so He steps out firmly and boldly before His enemies. It is His great day, and He is fully prepared.

XLV. THE PART PLAYED BY THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE PASSION OF CHRIST

The most painful feature of the Passion of Christ is undoubtedly the fact that priests played the leading part therein.

1. They are priests who have prepared this murder of the God-Man for a long time in advance and who have arranged to execute their plans.

"The chief priests and the scribes sought how they

might by some wile lay hold of him and kill him." (Mark xiv, 1). "And he [Judas] went, and discoursed with the chief priests and the magistrates, how he might betray him to them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money." (Luke xxii, 33 sqq.; Matt. xxvi, 14 sqq.). Then "came Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the ancients of the people." (Matt. xxvi, 47).

And thus it goes on, from scene to scene, to the death of the Lord, and beyond it. Everywhere the priests stand in the fore-ground as instigators, corrupters, and accusers.

There is no question but that the debasement of the Chosen People was essentially the work and the fault of a corrupt priesthood, unworthy of its high calling. "For the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her." (Lament. iv, 13).

2. True, this was the priesthood of the Old Law, but unfortunately it cannot be denied that also in the New Testament there have always been priests who more than all others renewed the Passion of Christ, frustrated His teaching and His sacrificial death, and became leaders unto destruction for whole nations. At whose door must the blame be laid for most of the heresies that have arisen from the days of the Apostles to the present time? Who brought about the disastrous schism of the East, the unspeakably sad scission in the West? Was it not above all others proud, stiff-necked, sensuous and covetous priests, monks and

bishops? Who bears the major blame for the moral degradation of whole periods, if not a debased clergy?

O priesthood! From thee went forth incalculable blessing, but also incalculable corruption! *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

VI. SECOND INTERVAL—THE DENIAL OF PETER

THE denial of Peter is a classical example of priestly weakness and aberration.

XLVI. THE CAUSES OF PETER'S FALL

What caused this man, whom Christ had compared to a rock, to deny his Master?

1. *Too much self-reliance.* This fault is characteristic of fiery, sanguine natures who too easily overrate themselves.

(a) The Master warns all the Apostles, and especially their leader, predicting to them their weakness. But Peter protests with the spirited declaration: "Although all shall be scandalized in thee, I will never be scandalized." (Matt. xxvi, 33; Mark xiv, 29). "Although I should die together with thee, I will not deny thee." (Mark xiv, 31). "Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thee." (John xiii, 37). This was not only irreverent towards the Master, but uncharitable towards his fellow-Apostles.

(b) The Master repeats His warning and foretells the exact time and circumstances of the denial. "In this night before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me

thrice." But to no avail. Peter shakes his head: "The others,—yes; I,—never!" His arrogance is an obstacle to serious reform. They who rely too much on themselves must learn by experience.

(c) Assurances of fidelity are *per se* well and good. Even St. Paul says: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. viii, 35 sqq.). But the erstwhile Saul is conscious of the fact that it is only the grace of God that makes him strong. "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv, 13). But Peter relies solely on his own strength. "I, I . . ."

(d) In this Peter has many imitators among later Apostles and disciples of Jesus, even to the present day. He has participated in the Last Supper and is filled with consolation and courage. He regards this emotion as a product of his own strength and thinks he is fit to assume the most difficult task.

In the flood-tide of his self-reliance the young priest and alumnus disregards the loving admonitions of his superior and spiritual director and remarks to himself: "That may be well enough for Philip and Thaddeus, but I am strong and brave, it does not concern me!" And so he pays no attention to his mentors, until tragic experience recalls their warnings to mind; but then it is often too late. *"Recordatus Petrus."*

2. *The neglect of prayer and self-denial.*

(a) How urgently the Master admonishes them: "Watch and pray" (Matt. xxvi, 38, 41) and in particular he upbraids Peter: "Simon, sleepest thou? couldst thou not watch one hour?" (Mark xiv, 37).

and its local manifestation, "Americanism," in our own times? The warnings and condemnations of the Vicar of Christ constitute an official reform, but the evils leave their serpent trails through successive generations.

3. The warnings of the Divine Master against Phariseeism and Sadduceeism are constantly re-echoed in the pontifical decrees, syllabi, and encyclicals; in the syllabus of Pius IX, for example, and the encycical against Modernism of Pius X. "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees!"

4. Cardinal Newman once remarked that English literature was distinctly Protestant in its spirit and tendency. It is more than true to-day that the literature of the masses is distinctly anti-Catholic in its ethical and religious aspects, and pagan in its æstheticism. This is only too evident in the periodical press and the great flood of worthless fiction with which we are deluged. It is impossible to live in this miasmatic atmosphere without infection. The Church's Index of Forbidden Books should have a much wider application than is at present given it. But, above all, the warning cry of our Divine Master: "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees," should be answered by the establishment of a virile Catholic press.

73. *The Testimony of Peter—Preaching Christ*
(Luke ix, 18 sqq.; Mark viii, 27 sqq.; Matt. xvi, 13 sqq.)

"Who do men say that I am?" . . . "But who do you say that I am?"

This double question is significant and should serve as the starting point for a priestly examination of conscience.

1. "Who do men say that I am?" Exactly. What do your own spiritual children say of Christ our Lord? Were you to question them all,—men, women, and children,—what would be their answer? Is He in very fact their Way, their Truth, and their Life? If not, upon whom rests the blame?

Is there perhaps something lacking in the sermons they hear every Sunday? Christ has left us a sufficient record of his work and words. His all-entrancing personality, His power to draw all men to Himself, shines through this record and its interpretation by the Church and her saintly children. But the curtain must be drawn aside, the light must be allowed to enter. Sermons and instructions are but the medium through which the *Lumen Christi* is transmitted. Is this medium crystal-clear, and are its diffused rays pleasing, beautiful, and appealing?

2. "And what do you say?"

You, who are the apostles, priests, and pastors, whom he calls His own, what has Christ become to you, in your prayer and meditation, in your visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in your daily offering of the Holy Sacrifice?

"Is the servant greater than the Master?" Can it be that, under the garb of a laboring-man or a working girl of your own flock, there beats a heart more attuned to the Divine Heart?

Applicable here also: "Not flesh and blood have

"Tetrum et insolitum crimen," St. Chrysostom calls this denial (*Serm.* 83 *in Matt.*), and St. Jerome (*In Matt.*, c. 29; *Epist.*, 149) rightly says that every attempt to justify *Peter* imputes an error to Christ Himself. Hence Peter manifestly committed a crime, and tradition says that he acknowledged his guilt without reservation by bitterly deploring it all his life.

2. This, then, is the beginning of the papacy, the result of the first persecution: a full-fledged betrayal, flight, apostasy, and denial. The first Pope falls that later generations might not be disturbed in the faith through scandal in high places. According to Gregory the Great, God permitted the fall of Peter, *"ut is, qui futurus pastor ecclesiae erat, et in sua culpa disceret et ex sua infirmitate cognosceret, quam misericorditer aliena infirma toleraret."*

XLVIII. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF PETER'S FALL

The fall of the Apostle appears even more tragic if viewed in the light of its attending circumstances.

1. *Who is the principal culprit?* It is the privileged Apostle whom the Lord Himself placed at the head of the Twelve and upon whom He built His Church.

It is the highly-endowed disciple who first professed the Divinity of Christ and was praised for this profession of faith by the Master: "Blessed art thou, Simon." (Matt. xix, 27).

Peter is a particularly sympathetic personality, an honest, impulsive man, whose impetuous love of the Master frequently manifested itself in a truly touching way. It is he who answers the question: "Do you

also desire to go?" with the assurance: "Lord, where shall we go? Thou hast words of eternal life."

It is he who walks upon the water to meet his Master. "Lord let me come to thee."

It is love which burns so fiercely in his assurances of unshakable fidelity: "I will lay down my life for thee." It is love which moves him to grasp the sword, love which prompts him to follow Christ, even though it be only at a distance. "He would not have been able to deny the Master, had he not remained so near to Him." (St. Ambrose, *In Luc.*, xxii, 54). It is love which drives him so rashly into the palace of Caiphas and causes him to linger in the outer court, in order to await the outcome.

True, it is not an enlightened love, but it is sincere. And behold! this same Peter, upon whom so many graces had been showered, and who was so sincerely devoted to our Lord,—this same Peter falls shamefully. What a warning against too great self-reliance! Even if a priest, or a religious, had spent many happy years as a faithful disciple of Christ, even if he had held responsible positions of trust and had been vouchsafed many extraordinary graces, he would not, as the example of Peter shows, possess any guarantee of final perseverance.

Look about among your clerical friends and acquaintances and count the many tragic instances of defection that have come to your notice, say, in the last decade. Therefore, let him who stands see to it that he does not fall! *"Miserere mei, Deus!"*

2. *When does Peter deny his Master?* Magdalen's

transgressions occurred before her conversion. After she had reformed and been received into favor by the Master, she remained ever faithful and true.

But Peter's sad fall occurs after a three years' novitiate in the school of the best of all masters, after he had witnessed innumerable miracles and received countless proofs of love from the Master. Peter denies his Lord shortly after the Last Supper with its incomparable and, one would have believed, ineffaceable memories, shortly after his First Communion and ordination, shortly after his heart had been fired by love and enthusiasm, and he had loudly proclaimed that nothing could separate him from his Master.

Thus it has been with many a priest and religious. When did he perchance fall shamefully? Was it not shortly after the holy Sacrifice, shortly after receiving Communion, shortly after ordination or profession with their sacred memories and enthusiastic assurances of never-ending fidelity?

XLIX. THE COURSE OF PETER'S DENIAL

Step by step the Apostle falls from sin to sin, sinking ever deeper into the mire.

1. *He begins with a sin of weakness,* a falsehood told in a moment of embarrassment, an act inspired by cowardly human respect. The portress (this office in those days was in the hands of women: cfr. Kings iv, 5; Acts xii, 13; Josephus, *Ant.,* vii, 2, 1) probably had received instructions on this occasion to keep outsiders away. She recognized the disciple "who was known to the high priest" (*i.e.,* Nicodemus or Joseph of Arima-

thea), but not this man who tries to sneak in with them. She noticed that he did not enter the palace, but remained outside in the court-yard. What business had he there? She became suspicious and watched his movements. Peter had sat down in a dark corner to warm himself at the fire. She observes how pale and agitated he is. Suddenly she recognizes him and exclaims: "He too was with Him," meaning that he was one of Christ's disciples. The chattering servants and soldiers, in part no doubt the same who had participated in the capture of the Master, immediately became more attentive. Peter sees them eyeing him. "What do you want? Who are you?" they query, threateningly. Peter suddenly realizes the danger of his position. What if his identity should be disclosed?

At a safe distance martyrdom appears heroic and desirable; but, confronted by the brutal actuality, the heart grows faint.

Peter is frightened and loses his composure. The ground seems to quake beneath his feet. A dark curtain falls down and separates the past from the present. And in this decisive moment, Peter's heroic fortitude, upon which he had relied so confidently, fails him. What shall he do? Flight is impossible. Shall he confess? But what will become of him if he does? So he attempts to save himself by a cowardly lie. "I am not he."

One who has strayed from the right path, easily slips deeper and deeper.

Peter utters those unspeakably tragic words: "I know not the man."

What, Peter, you know Him not,—Him who once was near and dear to you, whom you loved so fondly, in whose presence you felt so happy, whose words you drank in with such delight? You know Him not, your Master, your Lord, your God?—Alas, Peter, how could you say that! ! !

One is tempted to lose faith in human nature when confronted by such unheard of weakness!

How disgraceful this "I know Him not!" among men whom one does not wish to offend at any price!

How shameful such a denial in times of politico-ecclesiastical tension, when fidelity and public profession of the faith brings suffering and persecution!

2. *Finally Peter begins to swear.* He calls God to witness that he does not know this man (*coepit iurare et anathematizare*), and denies Christ by an oath.

How keenly Jesus must have felt this! It hurt Him more than all the objurgations and blows of the savage mob, for they knew Him not. It dealt Him a more painful blow than the judiciary murder contemplated by the high court, for the scribes and Pharisees were His enemies. It affected Him more even than the betrayal of Judas, for Judas was Judas. But Peter! How painful for a teacher when his best pupil, his pride and his crown, betrays and dishonors him.—"I know not the man!"

. . . . . .

Peter had once been in danger of drowning, when the Master stretched forth His hand and saved him. Again he is about to drown, this time through his own

fault. O Lord, if Thou dost not save him, he is lost!

Oh, turn Thy face upon him, give him but one look from those eyes which rested so lovingly upon him when he was led up to Thee by Andrew and Thou didst accept him as one of Thy chosen band!

"Ostende mihi faciem tuam et salvus ero." (Ps. xii, 3).

L. THE CONVERSION OF PETER

Peter fell through his own fault; but he could not rise again by his own strength. The first aid must come from:

I. The Master

1. The Master remembers poor Peter in spite of His own suffering, in the midst of His hearing before Annas and Caiphas. Thus He also remembers you, O priest of God, when you have strayed from the way of justice, and looks after you from the tabernacle.

2. The Master arranges it so that He meets Peter. How lovingly divine Providence arranges apparently fortuitous circumstances, in order to rescue an erring priest.

3. The Master gives him a look. "And the Lord turning looked on Peter." (Luke xxii, 61).

(a) There is pain and sorrow in this look, but also the warmth of Divine Love. It reveals to the Apostle the enormity of his transgression: "O Peter, what hast thou done?"—but also the magnitude of divine mercy. It is like a ray of sunshine dispersing the fog, melting the ice, and recalling the joyful springtime.

"Vulnerasti cor meum in uno oculorum." (Cant. iv, 7).

(b) What may not a single look of compassion from the eyes of a saintly priest accomplish! And if the Master has more than once deigned to look on thee with eyes of compassion, wilt thou not also have pity on some poor, fallen Peter?

II. The Disciple

1. *"And Peter remembered the word of the Lord."* (Luke xxii, 61). "He remembered," in the whirlwind of temptation he had forgotten everything. Then, suddenly, the Master's eye falls upon him and he immediately realizes the whole dreadful truth: "My God, I have denied my Master!" And lo! the cock crows and recalls the Master's warning. Suddenly, as the bursting of many waters, Peter recalls everything. everything that the Master once meant to Him. And He has denied Him! "O God, what have I done!" He feels as though the heavens were about to crash down upon him. An unspeakable sorrow pierces his soul.

"He remembers." Forgetfulness of God is the basis of infidelity, lukewarmness, weakness, of every sin committed by a priest. As long as the image of the Master is alive in him, all is well. But when it disappears, the great motive is removed and the strength which overcomes all temptations vanishes. The priest stumbles, falls. Hence the first step toward conversion is meditation on, realization of, one's state of soul (Spiritual Exercises). "He remembers."

2. *"Peter went out."* He instinctively feels that he must leave this place, get away from these surroundings, flee these companions who had made him such a miserable coward. Hence, away from here!

Do you hear it, O Priest of God? The warning is applicable also to you. You must flee from those persons, surroundings, books, influences which poison the well-springs of your faith and make your priestly heart weak, sensual, and cowardly. Away with them immediately; delay is dangerous.

"And Peter wept." (Luke xxii, 62). He has every reason for weeping and tears do not fail him because he still has love. He wept "bitterly," *i.e.,* from the depths of his soul. His sorrow is great, inconsolable, and the recollection of what the Master meant to him renews the flood of tears. Peter weeps so bitterly because his heart is still essentially good and noble, and has not hardened. His was truly a noble and sincere contrition, dictated by love.

Have you, O Priest of God, ever shed tears? Have you wept over your sins, infidelities, degrading weakness? Fortunate is the priest who still has tears to shed! Or were you satisfied, after a sorry fall, to obtain absolution, without perfect contrition, merely to find shelter from your persecutor, *i. e.,* your own evil conscience?

He (Peter) did not cease to weep. Every time he thought of his fall, new streams of tears ran down his cheeks. *"Quoniam peccatum meum contra me est semper."* (Ps. l, 5). His was a genuine, a noble, and a lasting conversion.

Perhaps you, too, O Priest of God, have at one time or another shed tears; but they dried up quickly, all too quickly.

What a difference between the conversions of different priests! The one is real, serious, permanent, like that of St. Peter, followed by no relapse. Others resemble passing showers. These are dictated by sentiment rather than by the will. And the end? *Sicut erat in principio, sic nunc et semper.*

VII. BEFORE THE CIVIL COURT

LI. JESUS IS DELIVERED TO THE CIVIL COURT

I. Christ before Pilate

"And they brought him bound, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor." (Matt. xxvii, 2; Mark xv, 1; Luke xxiii, 6; John xviii, 28).

1. What a spectacle! Israel drags its Messias before a gentile court. He had predicted that they would deliver Him to the gentiles. (Matt. xx, 19). He, and His holy Church, too, cannot be defeated with spiritual weapons; hence the political power is mobilized against them.

2. This step discloses the *perfidy of the Jewish priests.*

(a) They hate the Romans, bear their yoke grudgingly, and consider the mere presence of the gentile prefect as a disgrace and a desecration of the Holy City. But their hatred of Christ is stronger and outweighs all their other feelings and sentiments.

The Nazarene shall die, He shall die a degrading death, upon the Cross. But the gentile governor had reserved to himself the *ius gladii,* the right of life and

death. "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." And thus they hale him before the governor. (John xviii, 31).

(b) Then, too, "they feared the people." They distrusted the masses, who but a few days before had hailed Christ as the great Prophet with shouting and joyous acclaim. But if the Roman governor took things into his hands, they need not worry about an uprising in favor of the Prisoner. Before the Roman sword, which they so thoroughly feared, all contradiction was silenced.

At the same time the odium of the bloody judgment would thus be transferred to Pilate and the death sentence would receive the signature and seal of the highest Roman court in the country. This was sure to make a profound impression on the people.

Consequently, this unusual procession wends its way to the Prætorium in the early morning hours of this first Good Friday. "They led Jesus from Caiphas to the governor's hall. And it was morning." (John xviii, 28).

II. The Scruples of the Pharisees

"And they went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the pasch." (John xviii, 28).

1. To enter the Roman Prætorium was not forbidden by the Jewish law. Only an arbitrary interpretation of Numb. xxix, 22 (cfr. Deut. xvi, 4; Mark vii, 3; Acts x, 28; xi, 2 sq.) had made of it an unclean place. Hence these pious men of the high court call the

prætor outside, in order "that they might not be defiled." (John xviii, 28).

2. What hypocrites! Exteriorly they are clean and stay within the law, but at heart they are full of hatred and murderous thoughts,—truly "whitened sepulchers!"

3. Are there not priests who resemble these hypocrites by carefully avoiding all exterior blemishes and whatever appears contrary to the rubrics, but shamelessly approach the altar with their sinful desires and thoughts of hatred and celebrate mass sacrilegiously?

LII. THE ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE PILATE

I. The Attempt

1. Will the Roman Governor comply with their demand? The members of the Sanhedrin are worried on this score and undoubtedly the question as to how he should best be approached formed the subject of debate at the morning session. They realized the weakness of their cause. The session of the previous evening had shown how little ground they had upon which to base their accusations. Roman justice demands reasons, and Pilate, as they well know, is not favorably inclined towards them.

2. Above all they expect to impress the governor with their manner of approach. Hence they appear personally with all the insignia of their rank and office and with a numerous following (*"omnis multitudo eorum"*; Luke xxiii, 1). This was done to make a favorable impression and to strengthen their cause.

3. Moreover, it was of great importance that the

Governor should not investigate their proceedings of the evening before. Hence they come at an unusually early hour to emphasize the extreme urgency of the case, which, because of the approaching feast, admitted of no postponement.

They bring Christ before the Governor in fetters, as one already judged, in order to show Pilate that they expect a prompt judgment and its immediate execution.

Thus they hope to obtain a summary procedure. *"Expetierunt executorem magis saevitiae quam arbitrum causae . . . offerebant . . [Iesum] vinctum, . . . ut non auderet Pilatus absolvere."* (St. Leo the Great, *Serm. 8 de Pass.*)

They knew from experience, how a stormy, imperious attitude would impress the proud Prætor, for Pilate had on two or three previous occasions abdicated before them (Josephus, *Ant.*, xviii, 3, 1 and 2; *Bell. Iud.*, ii, 9, 3–4; Philo, *Ad Cai.*, 38).

4. Here the inveterate pride shows itself, which the Jewish race has preserved even to this day. How audacious and impudent they are where they feel themselves strong and scent the weakness of their adversary!

II. The Attempt Miscarries

1. The request of the High Priest to Pilate for military assistance was probably based on the claim that it was necessary to arrest a person dangerous to the State, the security of which was a matter of concern also to the Romans.

Pilate therefore expects to behold a typical criminal and probably was not a little disappointed to see instead a harmless rabbi of refined and serious mien. He perceives at once that something is wrong. He has the captive brought into court and himself appears before the Jews with the imperious question: "What accusation bring you against this man?" He demands proofs and refuses to condemn the accused simply on their depositions. This places the members of the Sanhedrin in a dilemma. They then play the rôle of injured innocence and reply: "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee."

2. It is genuine priestly pride and thorough-going Jewish arrogance that rings in these words. But the Governor does not allow himself to be fooled. He has taken in at a glance that the case has nothing to do with a political trangression in the Roman sense, but that by the injection of personal motives, jealousy and covetousness, these men have worked up a case against a hated rival. This was no concern of his. It were better to keep the despised clique at arm's length away from him. Promptly he gives them his answer: "Take Him with you, and judge Him according to your own law."

3. With such a decision the whole scheme of the Sanhedrin would have been foiled. True they could, in accordance with the spiritual jurisdiction that remained to them and was recognized by the Governor condemn the accused to the whipping-post or find Him guilty of blasphemy, according to Lev. xxiv, 16, *"Qui*

blasphemaverit nomen Domini morte moriatur; lapidibus opprimet eum omnis multitudo" (cfr. Jos. viii, 29; 2 Kings xxi, 6) and have Him stoned, which they had repeatedly attempted before (Luke xx, 19; John viii, 59; x, 31).

4. But how would the people have received such a treatment of their great Teacher? Moreover, this did not satisfy their hatred. No, Jesus must die the shameful death of the cross! But they were not authorized to crucify Him, and in this sense it was true what they said: "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." They have appealed to the Roman sword; but, as they now perceive, it will not be easy to accomplish their purpose. It is necessary above all to bring forward definite charges.

LIII. CLERICAL ENVY AND JEALOUSY

"For he [Pilate] knew that for envy they had delivered him." (Matt. xxvii, 18).

1. The principal motive of the entire trial, as the Governor had quickly discovered, was the envy and jealousy of the high priests and scribes against the great Teacher and Wonder-worker, whose singular greatness and sanctity threw them all into the shade.

2. There are scarcely more destructive passions than envy and jealousy. They poison and kill all the noble aspirations in man. To the jealous person every accomplishment, every virtue, and every success of a hated rival is unbearable. He beholds them with bitterness and would destroy them if he could.

Envy and jealousy give birth to aversion, stir up the

unholy fire of implacable hatred, and kill every aspiration of nobility and righteousness. They grasp at every means, no matter how base, to harm their rival and put him out of the running.

3. Seldom has this truly demoniacal passion (*"invidia diaboli"*) taken on such a frightful form as in the representatives of the Old Testament priesthood who appeared before Pilate. Would to God that the priests of the New Testament were immune from these shameful passions of envy and jealousy! But alas! the *invidia clericalis* belongs to the worst weeds which "the enemy of all good" sowed in the field of Christ's Church and which thrives so luxuriantly in spots.

This ugly passion ranges priest against priest, regulars against seculars, Order against Order, both at home and in the far-away mission lands. Jealousy, and its offspring, aversion, are passed down as an inheritance from generation to generation and become, as it were, a permanent tradition. And frequently this jealousy bursts forth into hatred and implacable aversion.

In spite of these vices, which are so directly opposed to the spirit of Christianity, envious and jealous priests pose as God's chosen vessels and boast of their piety and devotion in exactly the same manner as did the Pharisees and scribes.

What infinite scandal has not this *invidia* brought upon the Church, how much good has it not hindered!

LIV. THE POLITICAL CHARGES

"And they began to accuse him, saying: We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding

to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he is Christ the King." (Luke xxiii, 2).

I. The Points of Accusation

Pilate was impervious to religious accusations. He would have pushed aside such a charge derisively, as the proconsul Gallio did in Corinth at a later date: "But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, saying: This man persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was beginning to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews: If it were some matter of injustice, or an heinous deed, O Jews, I should with reason bear with you; but if they be questions of words and names, and of your law, look you to it: I will not be judge of such things. And he drove them from the judgment seat." (Acts xviii, 12 sqq.).

The Jews know this. Therefore they brand Jesus as a political transgressor and bring forward charges which they think will have weight with the representative of Cæsar.

1. *They accuse Him of stirring up the people,* namely, by inciting them to shake off the Roman yoke.

Revolutionary attempts of this kind were nothing new in Judea. The people were thoroughly disgruntled. This one charge, had it been proved, would have sufficed; for the Roman Governor made short shrift with revolutionists.

And the evidence? *"Invenimus,"*—we have found, that is, established by a judicial examination. What

sort of an investigation this was, we have already seen.

2. They accuse Him further of *forbidding the people to give tribute to Cæsar, i.e.,* to pay taxes. The payment of taxes was the prime reason for the Jewish discontent. Rome needed money, and her prætors and proconsuls in the provinces were well versed in shearing the sheep to the very skin. Woe to him who denied Rome's right to levy taxes! This had been the chief crime of Judas Gaulanites, who had caused the Romans so much trouble. (Acts v, 37; Josephus, *Ant.,* xviii, 1, 1). This accusation, too, in case it was established, would have sufficed. But there was no evidence. *"Invenimus,"* this was supposed to be enough.

3. *"He says that he is Christ the King."* This, according to the current Messianic belief of the people, primarily implied an attempt to free Israel from foreign domination, and hence a political opposition to Rome,—a crime punishable by death.

II. The Perfidy of the Accusations

These accusations faithfully reflect:

1. The *hypocrisy* of the Sanhedrin. They, the sworn enemies of Rome, pose as faithful subjects of the Emperor and act as if the perpetuation of Roman dominion lay nearest their hearts. This alone must have made the governor suspicious.

2. The *untruthfulness* of the whole pack. They call Christ a "malefactor,"—Him who went about doing good. "Question the possessed whom he has freed," says St. Augustine (*Tr. in. Ioa;* 114, 3), "the paralytics

whom He has healed, the deaf whom He has made to hear, the dumb whose tongues He has unloosed, the blind whom He has made to see; . . . let them say whether He is a malefactor."

"He stirreth up the people." When and where? He has unmercifully lashed the spiritual chiefs, but He never uttered a word which had a political bearing.

"He would make Himself king." But what are the facts? His miracles had reawakened the hopes of a Messias. The people applauded Him. Suddenly the idea springs up: He must be our King. Jesus therefore withdrew from the crowd and "fled again into the mountain." (John vi, 15).

Pilate quickly perceives the hollowness of their accusations. The first two he brushes aside with a gesture of disdain. Had there been any truth in them, he would have known it long ago. Only as regards the last accusation he wishes to obtain certainty and therefore goes into the hall of judgment and commands that Jesus be brought before him.

3. O holy Church of God, what accusations have you, and your priests, and your religious orders been forced to endure! "If they have called the goodman of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?" (Matt. x, 25).

LV. CHRIST BEFORE PILATE

"Pilate therefore went into the hall again, and called Jesus." (John xviii, 33).

1. It is the first time that Jesus and Pilate meet. Two great world-powers here stand in each other's

presence: the pagan Roman and the Christian world-power.

The *Roman world-power* is represented by Pontius Pilate. Proudly he stands there, surrounded by his officers and his curia, flanked by lictors with their fasces, the symbol of Roman jurisdiction, protected by the fully accoutered cohorts, who stand under arms,—all witnesses, signs and forms typical of the mighty world-power, *"Roma aeterna."*

And before Pilate stands the *Christian world-power* in the person of a Rabbi from Galilee, bound, accused, and haled into court, a picture of seeming impotence.

2. The Roman Governor casts a cold, critical, at first perhaps depreciatory glance at Jesus.

What a contrast, what a polaric difference between these two representatives of worldly and spiritual power!

Beware, proud Roman, the eagles of your undefeated legions will one day bow before this Man, they will carry His world-conquering doctrines into the very heart of the pagan world. Nay, more. Over the battlements of the Roman capital His victorious sign will appear, and the city itself, *"Roma aeterna,"* will become His royal city, the centre of His world-empire, whose confines will reach to the uttermost ends of the earth. Do you hear, O proud Roman? Universal history in future will not be dated *ab urbe condita;* this Man Jesus is introducing a new era and giving it His name.

3. It is the first meeting of Christianity with the almighty Roman empire, but not the last. This scene

will be repeated a thousand times in the course of the coming three centuries. Upon every page of the *Acta Martyrum* it will reappear in varying forms. On the one hand the proud arrogance of the emperors, their legates, praetors, and prefects; on the other, the calm, quiet dignity of a higher spiritual power.

As the Master prophesied His deliverance into the hands of the Gentiles, so it was to be also with His Church: "They will seize you and hale you into court . . . , but fear not; be not solicitous as to what you will say . . . ; I will be with you. Fear not, for I have conquered the world."

LVI. THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

1. *The Question:* "Pilate said to him: Art thou the King of the Jews?" (John xviii, 33).

There is something royal, something great, an unusual nobility in this Prisoner, which does not escape the Roman governor even under the cloak of humble impotence. The appearance of the Saviour impresses him, and he is inclined to suspect something higher in Him. Hence he puts the question, not derisively, but rather sympathetically: "Art thou also a king?"

2. *The Answer:* "Yes, I am a king."

Jesus might have answered in the negative, since He was not a king in the sense in which Pilate understood the word. But since the Jews had so intimately associated the ideas of a political and a religious Messias, the denial of the one might have seemed to involve

the other. Hence, Jesus clings to the royal title, but explains it in a manner that excludes every political interpretation. He meant to say:

(a) I am not a king by the grace of the people, not a worldly Messias-King, a claimant of the throne of this country, as you suppose, but a king of another and a higher order. You associate with the title of king worldly pomp and power: a throne and a scepter, horses and soldiers, ostentation and riches, battles and victories. With all this My kingdom has nothing in common, and for this very reason the Roman Empire has nothing to fear from Me. Were My kingdom of this world, My soldiers would battle for me; but My kingdom is not of this world.

(b) Christ emphasizes *the idea of the spiritual kingship of the Church.* We have here the Magna Charta of this kingdom. It is indeed an actual kingdom in the midst of this world and hence has a visible organization and jurisdiction. But it is not founded upon the idea of earthly power.

Christ's utterances have sometimes been quoted against the temporal power of the popes, and it is not to be denied that at certain times in the history of the papacy the temporal rather overshadowed the spiritual power.

Justly could old Ludolfus of Saxony complain: *"Multi praelati, qui sunt eius vicarii, contrarium videntur dicere facto, in pompis principibus terrenis aequantes vel etiam eos excedentes."*

These were mists, which arose and disappeared. On

the whole the Church of the Popes appears as a new and unique kingdom,—a kingdom which, as history teaches, gains in internal strength and dignity as it loses in worldly pomp and political influence. It is, and according to its charter remains, a kingdom that is in this world, but not of it.

3. Again Pilate asks: "Art thou a king?" and Jesus answers: "Yes, I am a king."

(a) Strange; never before had the Lord spoken thus. On the contrary, He had put far from Him whatever could be interpreted as referring to a kingdom. Why? Because the worldly Jews attached to the word "king" the representation of a worldly kingdom, to which they pinned their nationalistic hopes. But now that he has delivered Himself to His enemies and His exterior impotence definitively excludes all ideas of an earthly kingdom, He speaks clearly and declares publicly: "I am a king." Now all danger of a false interpretation of His kingship is removed.

(b) In the hour of His disgrace Christ proclaims His kingdom, in the fires of suffering He forges His royal crown.

The nature and character of His kingdom He Himself explains: "For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice." (John xviii, 37). His is the Kingdom of the Spirit, therefore, the dominion of the soul through the all-conquering power of truth. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." A higher, nobler kingdom than this does not exist.

LVII. THE KINGDOM OF TRUTH

"Pilate saith to him: What is truth?" (John xviii, 38).

I. Slowly with a slight tinge of irony and derision in his voice, Pilate hurls at Him the question: "What is truth?"

1. What is truth to him? True is the Roman power, true are Rome's glorious victories, true is her splendor and wealth, and the world-ruling sway of the Roman sword. These are palpable, ponderable facts and truths. What lies beyond them, particularly the truths of the supernatural order, has no interest for this free-thinking praetor.

2. Pilate here speaks as the representative of a world which knows but one truth and actuality, the actuality of the palpable and the ponderable, the triumph of brutal force, external success.

Against this Christ points to the infinitely greater actuality of the spiritual order, the power of truth, which makes its way quietly and without acclaim, but with miraculous strength and triumphantly.

3. Whether the Pilates of the past and present care to hear it or not, truth is and will ever remain a world-conquering power, a sun which, though at times overcast, ever again bursts forth victoriously through fog and clouds.

And this truth creates for itself a kingdom, a following, faithful subjects, who are held together by the strong bond of a common conviction. It unites and

welds into one all peoples, races, and nations, constituting them a great world-power,—the Kingdom of Christ.

The soul of man ever hungers and thirsts for the truth and finally perceives that, as the source of earthly light comes not from the depths of the earth, but rather from the starry regions of the universe, so the answer to all the great questions of humanity comes and must come from above, from otherworldly spheres.

"For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth." (John xviii, 37).

II. "What is truth?" Thus speaks also the modern sceptic with derisive laughter, when the Church, in accordance with her mission, gives testimony to the truth. And he turns away in his pride without awaiting an answer. And because they do not know the truth and will not know it, modern unbelievers fare as Pilate fared: they drift like rudderless ships without a compass, unable to reach harbor.

III. It is one of the sorest tribulations of the present-day pastor that the teaching of truth is least willingly accepted among the upper classes, among that *"élite"* which, swollen with worldly power and sated with worldly goods and pleasures, esteems itself above the nobler things of life. Thus it has ever been and thus it will ever remain. Pride, the lust of power, indolence, and scepticism shut themselves off against the truth.

"The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (John i, 5).

LVIII. THE POWER OF MORAL GREATNESS

1. Though the Lord willingly subjects Himself to the most rigid laws, He knows everywhere how to preserve His honor and dignity: in the Garden of Olives, before Annas, before the high court, before the Roman praetor, before Herod, and before the rabid mob. They all must know and appreciate with whom they are dealing, and they do know and appreciate it. His overpowering moral greatness fills them with impotent rage. They beat against it in their fury and strive with all their might to bring it down. But in vain. It stands as a rock amid the raging waves.

2. This is true moral greatness, which cannot be leveled by any power. It may be swayed, but not broken; reviled, but not dishonored; pressed, but not crushed. . . . It falls, but it does not remain on the ground; it is disrobed, but not dishonored; it is trodden under foot, but not destroyed; it is crucified, but fashions the wood of shame into a royal throne; it dies nobly, unconquered and unconquerable unto death.

Thus the scene before the judgment seat of Pilate manifests the victorious ascendancy of moral greatness over brutal force, the impressive nobility of true priestly worth.

The words of the Gospel clearly indicate the deep impression which the appearance and personality of the Master makes upon the Roman Praetor during the course of the trial. With a certain condescending air Pilate at the beginning of the trial asks: "Art thou the king of the Jews?" (John xviii, 33), evidently

expecting that Jesus will turn to Him for help. Instead of answering immediately, Jesus begins Himself to ask questions—a mark of authority. Doubtless His question sinks deeply into the heart of the Governor: "Sayest thou this of thyself, or have others told it thee of me?" In other words, are you acting on your own judgment or are you a weather vane, turned by every breath of the wind? Jesus here touches a sore spot and reminds the Roman official of his duty as a judge, to decide the case fairly according to the facts.

And when the Governor in apparent anger shouts back: "Am I a Jew? . . . what hast thou done?", Jesus gives him no direct answer, but calmly declares: "My kingdom is not of this world." (John xviii, 35).

The Master's speech as well as His silence bespeak nobility. The manner in which He meekly and quietly ignores all the angry accusations of His enemies, makes a deep impression upon the Roman Governor,—*"ita ut miraretur praeses vehementer."*

3. *The Secret of Moral Greatness.* Why does the Master display such dignity and calmness even in the hour of direst tribulation and weakness? Because He knows even in this hour that He is the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father with whom He remains indissolubly united; He looks beyond the present moment to the future, far into the glorious kingdom of eternity.

The worldly-minded man lives only in the present and measures victory and defeat according to the flickering appearance of present results. The spiritually-minded man looks out over the brief present into eter-

nity and beholds the higher divine economy beyond worldly strivings and results.

"You would have no power, were it not given to you from above." It was this same vision which upheld and supported the confessors of the faith in every age and enabled them to suffer patiently.

LIX. THE POLITICAL BY-PLAY

"And when he [Pilate] understood that he [Jesus] was of Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him away to Herod, who was also himself at Jerusalem, in those days . . . Herod . . . sent him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate were made friends that same day; for before they were enemies one to another." (Luke xxiii, 7, 11 sqq.).

I. Pilate

1. The enmity between Pilate and Herod had its origin in an act of violence on the part of the proud Roman Governor, who had ordered his soldiers to massacre a band of unruly Galileans in the Temple (Luke xiii, 1).

2. Political prudence moved the Roman Governor to put an end to this enmity. Who knows what the captious Galilean princeling might report to Rome, where accusations of this sort were only too favorably received? Here a splendid opportunity presented itself. The remanding of the trial to the court of Herod gave public recognition to the King's power and was

apt to placate him. At the same time Pilate got rid of this case which threatened to entangle him with the powerful Sanhedrin.

3. The remanding of the trial was an act of injustice. True, Herod, as Tetrarch of Galilee, was the superior of Jesus. But the Master's capture had taken place in Jerusalem, with the assistance of a Roman cohort, and therefore the case belonged before the Roman court, since Herod possessed no jurisdiction in Jerusalem.

In addition it was Pilate's duty to free Jesus whom he had acknowledged as innocent. Instead, he turns Him over to a tyrant on whose hands was the blood of John the Baptist.

Undoubtedly a high officer took Jesus to Herod with a flattering letter in which the Roman Governor delivered to Herod one of his own subjects and left the judgment to the enlightened wisdom of the King.

In proceeding thus, Pilate enters upon the road of compromises which was to lead him to his downfall.

II. Herod

The diplomatic move of the Roman Governor is successful at least in part. The vain princeling feels himself flattered by the attention shown him by the Roman official. It was in effect a bowing before his royal crown and, moreover, forced the proud priestly college to appear before his throne. Herod is satisfied and returns the compliment by leaving the final judgment in the hands of the Governor.

This counter-move of Herod shows him as a sly diplomat. He obtains the good graces of the Sanhedrin by heaping derision upon Jesus and leaving the final judgment with the Governor. He frees himself from all responsibility; for if he had pronounced judgment against Christ, he would have contradicted the finding of Pilate; if he had discharged Jesus as innocent, he would have brought down upon himself the anger of the Sanhedrin.

Thus are the broken threads between Judea and Galilee mended. From that day Herod and Pilate were friends. But Jesus is sent from one court to the other and made the football of crafty politicians.

III. Anti-Ecclesiastical Alliances

Whenever the battle turns against the Church and Christianity, separated brethren who are otherwise inimical unite and an alliance is quickly established between parties which are politically and religiously more widely apart than the Roman Governor and Herod. What strange coalitions between the extreme Right and the radical Left have not been formed against the Catholic Church!

LX. JESUS BEFORE HEROD

"And he [Pilate] sent him away to Herod." (Luke xxiii, 7).

What contradictions face each other here!

I. Herod

1. *His Character.*

(a) Herod is the type of those minor Oriental princes who, basking in the good graces of the Roman emperors, keenly enjoyed their all too short span of power. Passionately fond of ostentation, he had built for himself on the banks of Lake Genesareth a gorgeous residential city and had made the place the center of Hellenic-Roman culture and pagan immorality.

The tragic end of John the Baptist gives us an insight into the lewd character of the King, his association with courtesans, his voluptuous court life and his characterless weakness which led him to sacrifice a man like the Baptist to the whims of a danseuse. For political reasons he outwardly professes allegiance to the Jewish religion and appears in Jerusalem for the Paschal celebration. But the close association of the Herodians with the agnostic sect of the Sadducees sufficiently shows where his sympathies lay.

And this vain, unbelieving, and immoral man is now to judge whether Christ is guilty or innocent.

(b) Alas, before what courts must not the Church of God and her servants frequently appear! What judges and "experts" are those who decide the guilt or innocence of the defendant! They have not the slightest understanding of the supernatural and the divine element in the Church, but, like Herod, behold in Christ only a clever necromancer, a crazy zealot and a piquant curiosity!

2. *Christ Appears Before Herod.*

(a) It was the first time that the King of Galilee saw Jesus face to face. The Master had purposely shunned him up to this moment. The fame of the great Teacher and Wonder-worker had reached the royal palace and had aroused suspicion as well as curiosity. Herod "had long desired to see Him, because he had heard many things of Him." (Luke xxiii, 8; cfr. Luke ix, 7 sqq.; Matt. xiv, 1 sqq.). And now through the obligingness of the Roman Governor his wish is to be fulfilled. Ostentatious beyond measure, the King had built a new palace beside the ancient fortress in the upper part of the city and furnished it most extravagantly.[1] Here, probably in the chamber, he receives the renowned Rabbi in public audience, surrounded by courtiers and a bodyguard.

(b) He prepared himself for a highly interesting interview and took for granted that the Rabbi, now entirely within his power, would give him a proof of His miraculous gifts. "And he hoped to see some sign wrought by Him." (Luke xxiii, 8).

Some would have it that Herod wished Jesus to heal the paralytic Salome, who had been brought into the palace for this purpose.

(c) "And he questioned him in many words." (Luke xxiii, 9). Who might He be? Was John still actually alive? Why had Jesus never visited him in Tiberias? He had heard many reports of His remarkable miracles and His beautiful parables. He regretted exceedingly that Jesus had become the victim of an in-

[1] Josephus. *Ant.*, XV. 9, 3; *Bell. Iud.*, V, 4, 4.

trigue. He, the King, would take Him under his protection and would favor Him, provided He would perform a miracle in his presence. The King plays the part of the gracious sovereign and patronizingly condescends to the prisoner before him.

3. There are still at the present time men of Herod's type, who occasionally assume a friendly and patronizing air towards the Church, her clergy and her religious Orders. How should the priest of God meet such hypocritical advances?

II. The Master

1. It would have been a simple matter for our Lord to win the Galilean King. He needed but show a little favor to this vain princeling, and Herod would have thrown the weight of his influence with Pilate in His favor and decided with Pilate against the Sanhedrin. The declaration of Pilate: "I find no guilt in Him," had shown the way to Herod.

2. But the Master does not meet the advances of the King. Not only does He not perform a miracle, but He does not even favor the voluble prince with a single word. "Herod questioned him in many words, but he answered him nothing." (Luke xxiii, 9).

Before Annas, Caiphas, and Pilate, Christ spoke, though only what was necessary; but here before Herod He is silent, though He foresees the consequences. He presents the example of a truly priest-like greatness and strength of character, which admits of no concessions to a frivolous free-thinker and excommunicated adulterer.

3. In this the great confessors of the Faith followed His example. They remained true to their principles and did not allow themselves to be moved a hair's breadth either by flattery or threats. How disgusting in the light of such exalted greatness of spirit appear those worldly-minded, obsequious court-clerics who, striving to win the favor of royalty, sacrifice the most sacred principles, only to make themselves agreeable and to gain for themselves a position of ease! How much has not this characterless conduct injured the Church of God!

4. "Jesus answered him nothing." (Luke xxiii, 9). His noble silence is most eloquent. The Purest of the pure has not a word for this debauchee, who had sacrificed the Baptist to the whims of his mistress and who lived in open adultery.

Woe to the soul when God is silent and withdraws all communication! Woe to the priest who does not live immaculately and from whom the Holy One turns away in silence!

LXI. HEROD'S REVENGE

"And Herod with his army set him at nought, and mocked him." (Luke xxiii, 11).

I. Herod's Anger

The greater the curiosity of the King and his hope for some exciting adventure, the greater his disappointment and rage. No more trying punishment could

have been inflicted on this vain princeling than the calm silence of the Master.

Now Herod shows his true nature. His attitude is that of injured pride and he mumbles something about "fools and fanatics." And the whole circle of weaklings surrounding him take their cue from him and try to excel him in showing derision and contempt.

II. The Garment of Derision

And Herod "put on him a white garment." (Luke xxiii, 11).

1. It is likely that the suggestion to clothe the Master with a white garment as a mark of derision came from this circle of perverse courtiers. It amounted to a judgment to the effect: "He is a fool and a fanatic, not to be taken seriously."

Among the accusations which were brought before Herod by the members of the Sanhedrin undoubtedly was Christ's claim to royal dignity. ("And the chief priests and scribes stood by, earnestly accusing him"; Luke xxiii, 10). The white garment of derision which they put on Him (candidates—*candidati*—wore white garments) was intended to ridicule this claim of His.

2. This is like the revenge which the present-day world takes upon the priest who refuses to compromise his principles and meets the invitation to do so with silence. The world turns away from him in derision and speaks of the "uncouth, narrow, and backward cleric." He who is not of one mind with its votaries

and does not burn incense before its idols has once and for all spoiled his chances with them.

O Priest of God, do not allow yourself to be misled!

3. It is nothing to appear great in the glittering attire of royal power and honor; but it is something exceptionally impressive and overwhelming to remain great in the face of contempt and derision. The contempt and derision of these despicable cowards did not in the least affect the overtowering greatness and dignity of Jesus. Calmly, quietly, majestically He stands before Herod, clothed in the garment of contempt.—"Art thou a king?"—"Thou hast said it, I am a king."

III. The Church's Vesture of Derision

The rôle of Herod and his contemptible congeners has been assumed in the centuries that followed by inimical parliaments, an unbelieving science, and an apostate art, literature, and press. It is their aim to make the Church ridiculous in the eyes of the people and to clothe her with a garment of derision. Everything about her is ridiculed—her teachings, her claim to infallibility, her supernatural mission. The stigma of contempt is expressed in such words as "clerical," "implicit faith," "the dark ages," and "hyper-conservative."—"But Herod with his soldiers mocked him."

IV. The Priest's Vesture of Derision

Is not the clerical garb, too, and particularly the religious habit, a garment of derision for millions since

the ill-fated "Reformation"? In certain sections and at certain times this derision and contempt may be outspoken and public; in others, among large sections of non-Catholic and un-Christian people, it is silent and furtive. Thus even the priest of to-day has occasionally presented to him the opportunity of suffering derision for the name of Christ.

V. The Vesture of Derision for the Blessed Eucharist

Herod and his satellites revile what they do not know. They see but the distorted picture of Christ as it is thrown upon the screen of their worldly and non-spiritual consciousness. Thus Christ fares also in the Holy Eucharist. Millions despise Him in the white garment of the Sacred Host. What pitying contempt do not modern "intellectuals" and freethinking Protestants shower upon this sublime mystery! They deride what they know not.

VI. The Vesture of Derision for Christ and the Saints

Christ, the Eternal Word, the Incarnate Wisdom of God, branded as a fool and an imbecile, does nothing to change Herod's opinion, but silently accepts his contempt and mockery.

The contemplation of these and similar incidents of the Passion engendered in the Saints that strong desire for contempt and derision which the world finds so in-

comprehensible. For worldlings there is nothing more degrading than to be considered a fool. They spare no effort to preserve their reputation for intellectuality and their claim to culture, and ward off contempt and derision at all costs.

But it is otherwise with the Saints. St. Ignatius of Loyola, among others, solemnly vows: *"Volo et eligo magis opprobria cum Christo pleno opprobriis quam honores, et magis desidero aestimari insipiens et stultus cum Christo, qui prius habitus fuit pro tali, quam sapiens et prudens in hoc mundo."* (*Lib. Exerc., De Tribus Humilitatis Modis*).

LXII. CHRIST OR BARABBAS

I. Pilate's Plan

1. Pilate's attempt to shift the trial to Herod failed. He matched his wits against the diplomatic dexterity of the Galilean "fox"—and lost. Willy nilly, the Roman Governor had to handle the case himself. Meanwhile the situation grew worse, as great crowds gathered and the Sanhedrin, who had assured themselves in advance of the support of the masses, are determined to prosecute the Prisoner to a finish.

2. "Now upon the solemn feast day the governor was accustomed to release to the people one prisoner, whom they would." (Matt. xxvii, 15). This seemed to present to the wily Governor a happy way of escape. He had, undoubtedly, meanwhile made inquiries and learned of the wide-spread favor which Jesus enjoyed among the people. Why not appeal directly to the people and

present Jesus to them as the one to be released? This plan would surely be successful if he placed beside Him some degraded malefactor.

"And he had then a notable prisoner, that was called Barabbas." (Matt. xxvii, 16). In order to play safe, Pilate does not permit the people to choose one of the captives, but rather forces them to make a choice between Christ and Barabbas. If the plan proved successful, then the Roman governor would also achieve a victory over the hated Sanhedrin.

II. The Choice

1. The Gospel succinctly characterizes Barabbas by saying: *"qui in seditione fecerat homicidium"* (Mark); he was a murderer; *"erat latro"* (John); *"insignis latro"* (Matt.); he was a robber, an enemy of society, feared and shunned by all as a wild beast in chains. It is this scoundrel whom the Roman Governor brings forward and places beside the "King of the Jews,"—the pure, all-holy Son of God. It seemed unthinkable that the people would choose Barabbas.

2. *Christ.* Here stands the great Prophet and Miracle Worker so frequently applauded by the crowd, He, who performed wonders and taught and instructed as no human being ever did before, who was followed by thousands upon thousands into the desert, whom they never tired of praising, whom but a few days previously they had received like a king.

And now they reject Him and prefer Barabbas. *"Non hunc, sed Barabbam!"*

How heart-rending the divine complaint: *"Cui assimilastis me et adaequaestis me et comparastis me et fecistis similem?"* (Is. xlvi, 5).

3. But the most tragic thing of all is that the poor misguided people made this choice not of their own free will, but egged on by their priests. "The chief priests and ancients persuaded the people, that they should ask Barabbas, and make Jesus away." (Matt. xxvii, 20).

III. Christ or Belial

It is unbelievable to what lengths the mob will go, once it has been aroused. "Away with Christ! Long live Marat! Hail Robespierre!" cries the mob in the French Revolution. Similarly in other countries.

Merciful Heaven! What degraded and shameless scoundrels has not misguided humanity, wandering away from Christ, raised to the throne and feted!— *"Obstupescite, caeli, super hoc, dicit Dominus: Duo enim mala fecit populus meus: me dereliquerunt fontem aquae vivae et foderunt sibi cisternas dissipatas, quae continere non valent aquas."* (Jer. ii, 12 sq.).

IV. Barabbas in the Life of the Priest

To what extremes cannot blinding passion lead even a priest!

Once, Jesus was everything to him; the Master's presence filled him with joy; His name was the sweetest of all names.

Then came temptation, strong passion, an unbelievable change of mind. What the priest formerly repelled with indignation, suddenly appears worthy of his affection and best effort. Christ recedes into the shade, Barabbas comes to the fore. In hours such as these, what has not many a priest preferred to Christ? O unfathomable mystery of weakness!

V. Unjust Treatment

This must be numbered among the most bitter experiences of a priest and a religious on the pathway of life. Priests of God, when you are aggrieved, do not fail to recall that the Divine Master suffered immeasurably more than you. You have never been set aside in favor of a Barabbas.

LXIII. THE SUDDEN CHANGE IN THE ATTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE

1. The Barabbas incident points to a new and noteworthy development in the tragedy of the Passion, namely the sudden change in the attitude of the populace.

We can understand that the High Priests, the Scribes, and the Pharisees should turn with intense hatred against Christ. But why is it that the people, who are so deeply indebted to the Master, who had but five days previously acclaimed Him with joy, now turn against Him and join His enemies?

2. This crowd, which constantly grows larger, is

made up of various elements. Its nucleus consists of the *native population of the Holy City.* They were never at heart favorably disposed towards the Lord. A considerable portion of them lived mediately or immediately off the Temple, and hence were dependent upon the good will of the high priests. These Jerusalemites are the head and front of the movement against Christ.

Then there is a large number of *Easter pilgrims.* Those from the provinces, particularly from Galilee, are on the whole well disposed, nay devoted to the Lord. It was mainly they who had welcomed Him at His entrance into Jerusalem. Those who hail from the Jewish Diaspora know of Him only through hearsay and have, therefore, taken no decisive stand in His regard.

In the main, however, the situation was such that the Sanhedrin feared the people, and there was a possibility of a revolution in favor of the despised Nazarene.

With this possibility in mind, they have convoked the court in the early morning hours, when relatively few people are upon the streets and the early morning service claim a portion of the pilgrims. But by and by the crowd grows. It principally consists of the native rabble, devoted to the high priests and ready to do their bidding.

As soon as the capture of the Great Prophet has been reported through the city, hundreds, nay thousands stream to see Him.

Moreover, it being the day on which the people, ac-

cording to an old custom, were allowed to demand freedom for one of their captives, many came to witness this noteworthy act.

Thus in the period between Christ's first and second hearing before Herod there had taken place a complete change of scene. In the streets and on the broad plaza before Pilate's court an immense throng winds about; through the city there runs a murmur, as of a nearby conflagration.

3. For some time the disposition of the crowd is uncertain. The Galilean pilgrims in particular cannot understand why their Great Teacher and Wonder-Worker should be accused of a capital crime.

It is, however, characteristic of a crowd that it is influenced less by reason than by impressions and the brutal power of facts. The facts seem to militate against Jesus. That the highest court has found Him guilty, operates powerfully against Him; the lying propaganda of the leaders does the rest.

The determining factor, however, undoubtedly is the incomprehensible attitude of the Master. It seems as if all power and the gift of working miracles had departed from Him. Without resistance He allows Himself to be taken captive, to be dragged from judge to judge, to be beaten, despised, and ridiculed. Those who believe in Him expect a divine interposition, a flaming up of holy anger. Instead, He is scourged, crowned with thorns, and stands naked before the people. There can be no doubt but that God had deserted Him. He is guilty. Love, honor, and enthusiasm have been converted into hatred, contempt, and

aversion, and the mob begins to shout: *"Crucifige!"*

On this occasion mob suggestion operates with elemental fury. As yet a portion of the people had withheld their judgment. But now, as the outcry of the multitude sweeps like a tornado through the streets and open places, those hitherto undecided are carried away. The nobler sentiments of individuals are buried in the seething maelstrom of mob fury.

4. How frequently were not the same scenes enacted in later centuries on the occasion of the great apostasies of entire nations. Apparently without reason the religious beliefs of whole countries are changed overnight. That which they held as holy, true, and honorable yesterday, they despise to-day. The joyful Hosanna turns into a terrible *"Crucifige!"* One need but recall the Protestant Reformation or the French Revolution, not to mention later persecutions. What bitter disappointments and painful experiences did not the Church of God taste on such occasions!

And do not Church and clergy endure similar trials even to-day?

Looking back over the years, how peaceful and well-regulated everything appeared in Europe prior to 1914. Then came the World War and its sad ending. Our young men returned and with them an era of widespread moral laxity, a moribund public conscience, and intellectual convulsions which shook the very foundations of religious belief. Everywhere the spectre of infidelity stalks through our cities and particularly our industrial centers.

LXIV. THE SCOURGING OF CHRIST

The attitude of the people against Jesus had taken Pilate by surprise, so that he was led into making the incredible decision: "I find no cause of death in Him; I will chastise Him therefore, and let Him go." (Luke xxiii, 22).

I. The Lord is Scourged

"Then therefore, Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him." (John xix, 1).

Alas, the laconic brevity of the Evangelist, who reports this frightful occurrence without the slightest elaboration of detail or color. But the short word *"flagellavit"* suffices to reveal to us the whole terrible truth.

1. *The Horrors of the Scourging*

(a) The penalty of scourging was one of the most cruel of stern Roman justice. *"Horribile flagellum,"* Horace calls it. (*Sat.*, i, 3, 119).

The very form of the command: *"I, lictor, collige manus, caput obnubito, virgis caedito!"* or: *"Summove, lictor, despolia, verbera; lege, age, animadverte"* (Seneca), and: *"Adstringite ad columnam fortiter"* (Plaut., *Bacch.*, iv, 7, 24) is terrifying. The scourging was actually "the terrible prelude to death" (Hug).

(b) While the Jewish law allowed but thirty-nine strokes (Deut. xxv, 3; Jos., *Ant.*, iv, 8, 21), the Romans knew no limit. Although, according to Ulpian

(*De Poen.,* 8), it was forbidden to condemn a culprit to be scourged to death, many succumbed to this terrible torture. The scourges, made heavy with bones and pieces of lead, laid open the flesh to the very bone (Jos., *Bell. Iud.,* vi, 5, 3). Those who did not die on the spot were crippled for life. (Philo, *In Flacc.,* 40; Suet., *Catil.,* 26).

We can hardly assume that the scourging of Jesus was inflicted in a milder form, for it was intended to satisfy the hatred of the Jews. "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness in Him." Thus had the prophet predicted of the Man of Sorrows (Is. i, 6; liii, 2 sqq.).

The Son of God and of Mary, the most beautiful among the children of men, stands there naked and exposed at the pillar, cruelly torn and tortured, like a bed of lilies and roses crushed by a violent storm! My God, how canst Thou permit such a thing?

2. *The Shame of the Scourging.* The Roman scourging was preceded by a complete denudation of the culprit, *"in foro medio nudari"* (Cic., Verr., v, 62). *"Iussit nudatos flagellari"* (Philo, *In Flacc.,* 40; cfr. Eus., *Hist. Eccl.,* viii, 10).

Ordinarily only slaves or criminals, who had perpetrated an unusually heinous crime, were scourged. Scourging, therefore, signified moral and civic death. It branded a man for life. That was the reason why Paul escaped this penalty by pointing to his Roman citizenship. It would have disgraced him for life and thus prejudiced his whole career.

3. *The Injustice of the Scourging.* Up to this point,

Pilate still had preserved at least a glimmering of the traditional Roman sense of fair play; but now his sense of justice deserts him.

What a procedure! "I find no cause of death in Him, but I will chastise Him," that is, I will forever brand this innocent man as a criminal, I will destroy His moral character;—not because He deserves it, but solely to satisfy the fiendish fury of this canine mob.

II. Flagellation in Christian Asceticism

Not a single detail of the life and Passion of our Lord is lost or forgotten in the Church of Christ. The terrible scene at the pillar has stirred millions of noble hearts and filled them with shame and sorrow. "He suffers unjustly, He suffers for me, in expiation for my sins," they say; "His sacred flesh is innocent; I am the guilty criminal." Thus they take up the scourge and use it mercilessly upon themselves, and the scourge from the earliest Christian times becomes an almost indispensable instrument of Christian asceticism for the mortification of the flesh. No saint, no penitent and no religious who tries to live up to his rule has failed to employ the scourge or to experience in his own body the torments of flagellation.

It is not a good sign that the scourge threatens to disappear more and more from present-day asceticism. We speak of an interior asceticism as if that which is felt in the interior of the soul did not tend to express itself exteriorly.

The saintly Bishop Michael Wittmann of Ratisbon

in his advent sermons for 1830 enthusiastically recommends this pious practice, and has composed a prayer to accompany it:

"My Lord Jesus! For love of Thee and to do Thee honor, in union with Thy bitter suffering, I now assume this penance, in order that I may bear in my flesh the signs of Thy wounds and may no longer belong to myself, but rather to Thee, and that Thou mayest be crucified in me and I in Thee. O Jesus, Thou art my joy and my sweet love! I desire ever to bear the marks of Thy death on my body, so that Thy life may be revealed in me."

III. Scourging and the Sins of the Flesh

In the eyes of true Christians there was and is one particular sin for which Christ was scourged. "He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins. . . ." (Is. liii, 5).

This sin plays a tragic rôle in the lives of some priests. Why did the saints mortify their bodies so cruelly? Was it not to hold in check the lusts of the flesh and to avenge every weakness?

O Priest of God! Come, cast yourself down before the Saviour, who is being scourged for you, and contritely petition Him most fervently, first for forgiveness in the event that your untamed passions added to His sufferings, and secondly for the grace of resolute denial and renunciation. *"Praecinge me, Domine, cingulo puritatis. . . ."*

LXV. THE CROWN OF THORNS

"And the soldiers platting a crown of thorns, put it upon his head; and they put on him a purple garment. And they came to Him and said: Hail, King of the Jews; and they gave Him blows." (John xix, 2 sq.).

I. The Cruel Mockery

1. "I am a King," Jesus had declared before Pilate. This statement had aroused the contempt of the barbarous soldiers, and they proceeded to make Him the hero of a mock coronation ceremony.

They present to Him the royal insignia (crown and scepter), they clothe Him with purple, they swear allegiance to Him (*adoratio* and *acclamatio*),—all in bitter mockery turning gradually into physical violence. ("They struck Him.")

2. It is always a savage sport for the common rabble to lay hands on those of higher station who come within their power, as if they would avenge themselves for their own lack of moral and spiritual nobility.

Woe! if a consecrated representative of God falls into their hands! How gleefully they vent their rage upon the "reverend priest" and perform a scalp-dance with the sacred vestments!

3. This scene of mockery also has its counterpart in the history of the Church. How is not the papacy with its claims and titles derided, despised, and dragged into

the mire! It is as though a degraded press had assumed the rôle of the savage soldiery.

4. Among the most beautiful and significant practices of Catholic ascetical life is the genuflection made before the Blessed Sacrament. How impressive is this act of adoration when the heart and soul bend with the body before Christ in the tabernacle! *"Ave, rex!"*—"I hail Thee, O King and Saviour! Though Thou appearest insignificant and helpless under the species of bread, I adore Thee as my Lord and God, and bend my knee to Thee as Thy humble servant." But what becomes of this sign of loyalty when living faith and the spirit of devotion are absent? A caricature, a mockery, even though unintended. How much different would the genuflection be if at least we priests made it an unvarying rule never to enter the house of God without recollecting ourselves interiorly and asking the question: "Whither art thou going? What art thou about to do?"—*"Introibo ad altare Dei."*

II. The Crown of Thorns

1. Upon millions of crucifixes appears the crown of thorns and impressively reminds us of Christ's Passion. *"O caput cruentatum!"*

It is a mock crown, a crown of pain; and yet how beautifully it adorns His sacred Head! A great artist once remarked that it is the crown of thorns that gives to the Head of the Suffering Saviour its singularly noble expression. He bears no glittering crown of gold, as earthly rulers. His diadem is of another

sort. In this crown He stands before us as the sublime exemplar of patient suffering and heroic resignation. It typifies with wonderful accuracy the victory of the spirit over the flesh. Christ is a king of suffering.

2. *La Sainte Chapelle.* How beautiful is the Catholic practice of treasuring everything that is in any way related to our Lord as a priceless relic. The sacred crown of thorns once formed a precious part of the Byzantine crown treasury. When the Emperor Baldwin presented it to the saintly King Louis of France, in 1239, the latter sent a royal commission to Constantinople to bring the crown to France. With loud lamentations the people of Byzantium accompanied the procession to the vessel which was to bring the precious relic to Venice. The journey from Venice to Paris was like to a triumphant procession. The cities of Vercelli and Sens still celebrate the memory of the day (the 23rd of February and the 11th of August, respectively) when the holy crown passed through their territory. (*Festum transitus s. Coronae*). When the procession reached Troyes, the King with his whole court came to meet it. In holy impatience he ordered the relic to be taken from its silver case, and all, King, princes, courtiers, and people, fell weeping upon their knees and venerated Our Lord's Crown of Thorns. "They felt as if they saw the Lord actually crowned with thorns before their very eyes," writes Bishop Walter, an eye-witness.

The entry into Paris, on the 12th of August, 1239, was made the occasion of a remarkable demonstration of faith, love, and devotion.

The royal chapel in Paris, where the relic was first deposited, did not appear to the King a sufficiently worthy place for so precious a treasure. In 1242 he laid the cornerstone for "La Sainte Chapelle," the finest jewel of early medieval Gothic architecture. After it was completed, in 1248, a veritable migration began to wend its way thither. The whole of France went on a pilgrimage to Paris in order to see and honor the Holy Crown of Thorns. The King himself took pride in exhibiting it to his people. Every evening he spent on his knees in pious veneration before the relic. Later the Crown was publicly displayed every Good Friday. No prince or nobleman was allowed to appear before it without doffing the usual headgear. [1]

3. *The Crown of Thorns and the Saints.* From the contemplation of Christ's Passion grew some curious mystical flowers. The Saints were not satisfied with purely spiritual contemplation. Catherine of Siena, Rose of Lima, Elizabeth, Peter Claver, and others felt impelled to share the actual pains of the crowning with Our Saviour, and wove for themselves a real crown of thorns and placed it upon their heads, pressed its points unmercifully into their temples, and rejoiced that they could suffer in some measure like their Divine Master.

4. *The Crown of Thorns and the Tiara.* There are those who pretend to discover a contradiction between Christ's Crown of Thorns and the Pope's golden tiara, and rail at the kingship of the "Papa Re." But if Christ is a king, then His representative on earth is also a king, and if Christ has founded an empire embracing

[1] *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach,* xlviii, 286 sqq.

all peoples and countries, then it must have the outward characteristics of an empire. To be sure this may easily lead to the introduction of a worldly spirit and a display of earthly pomp which would be alien from the humility of the Cross. At bottom, however, the tiara has ever remained a crown of thorns, which presses heavily upon the head of the Pope and thus constantly reminds him of the Master.

LXVI. "ECCE HOMO!"

"Pilate therefore went forth again . . . and he saith to them: Behold the Man!" (John xix, 4, 5).

I. The Transformation

The scourging and the crowning with thorns and the general maltreatment to which He has been subjected have tragically altered the Master's appearance. Half-naked, clad only in the tatters of a Roman chlamys, the crown of mockery upon His brow and pressed into His temples, His countenance pale and covered with blood and spittle,—thus He stands like a leper, He who has professed Himself "the Son of the Living God."

What a terrible change has taken place! It is as though the prophet foresaw this spectacle when He cried out as if in terror and deep emotion: "There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of Him: despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity." (Is. liii, 2 sqq.).

II. Jesus Is Presented to the People

Thus the Lord is led out upon a staircase or porch of the palace and exhibited to the people: "Behold the man!" or: "What a man, what a picture of misery!" His suffering, His shame, and His degradation are expected to win the sympathy of the crowd.

"Ecce homo!" What a deep meaning in these words!

"Ecce homo!" Behold how I stand before you! Have pity on me!

"Ecce homo!" Behold what a changed man He is! Have you envied Him? He is no longer worthy of your envy. Have you hated Him? Your hatred has been satisfied. Has He sinned? He has fully expiated His crimes.

"Ecce homo!" Has He set Himself up as the Son of God? Behold how little there remains of this claim. Thus the Roman governor pleads for mercy and compassion for the King of the Jews.

III. The Result

1. Pilate here again shows that he has no knowledge of human nature. He appeals to the mercy and justice of the mob. But this wavering and passionate mob, thanks to the propaganda of the high priests, has already made its decision. Thus the exhibition of the Man of Sorrows has exactly the opposite effect. The sight of the mutilated figure before them robs them of

their last sentiment of honor and respect and fills them with hatred, aversion, and furious anger.

2. This *Ecce homo* with its shameless exposure is not capable of brushing aside the patent fact that this man, in spite of all outward signs of weakness and impotence, is more than ever on a higher plane than all others.

"I am from above, you are from below."

The enraged enemy, the howling mob, the mocking unbelievers, all know and feel this keenly. Hence the wild answer: "Away with Him, crucify Him!" (John xxix, 15).

IV. Behold the Man!

These words are also used against the Church of God, the papacy, and the priesthood. The enemies of Christ point the finger of scorn at our human weaknesses and cry out mockingly: *"Ecce homo!* He claims to be the representative of God and a divine institution!"

Alas! it is but too true that the Church is human, much in her is shamefully human. And yet she is and remains the Church of Christ, and all shame and dishonor, all the just and unjust accusations that are raised against her, must not mislead us regarding her divine nature and mission. And because physical violence, trickery, and intrigue cannot rob her of her divine character and royal title, the hatred of the world remains unsatisfied and, as against her Master, so also against her, the furious cry is raised: *"Tolle, tolle!*

Away with her! *Ecrasez l'infâme!* Put her to death, destroy and abolish her; nothing else can help us *Venite, eradamus eam!"*

V. Ecce homo!

As then, so now, modern unbelief and its rationalistic exegesis has disfigured the sublime image of the Son of God, disrobed Him, robbed Him of His Divinity and clothed Him in a few tattered rags, with a reed as a scepter, and leads Him before the ignorant mob and says: "Behold He is nothing but a man!"

"Ecce homo!" Is it to be wondered at that so many turn away from Him and cry out with the Jews: "Away with Him, crucify Him?"

LXVII. "CRUCIFY HIM!"

"When the chief priests, therefore, and the servants, had seen Him, they cried out, saying: Crucify him, crucify him!" (John xix, 6).

I. The Sanhedrin's Thirst for Blood

Like a howling storm the cry, "Crucify him!" passes over the holy mount, out over the city.

Pilate had not expected such an answer. He is disappointed, terrified, indignant. He had achieved the very opposite of what he had expected in his short-sighted opportunism. The tiger has tasted blood and thirsts for more. The Sanhedrin is not satisfied with partial payments. As the weakling has yielded to

them thus far, they are determined to carry the thing to the bitter end. He must deliver Christ up to them to be killed. "Crucify Him!"

II. The Rejection of the Messias

1. "Crucify Him!" Who is it that utters this terrible cry? It is "God's Chosen People," who have for centuries expected the Messias, looked forward to His coming with intense longing, and centered all their hopes in Him. It is the nation of the Patriarchs and Prophets, the heir of their promises, the bearer of a remarkable history of grace and of singular privileges. It is the people who for three long years witnessed the truly divine life and work of Jesus and but a few days before joyously acclaimed Him as "the Son of David." "Praised be He who cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel!"

And this same people, in a moment of mad delusion, turn against Him and demand His death upon the tree of shame. It is the apostasy of Israel from its Messias, the closing scene of a wonderful symphony ending in a raucous discord.

The *"Veni, Veni, Emanuel"* has become a *"Tolle, tolle, crucifige."* This is truly a tragic ending to four thousand years of history.

2. O Priest of God, if a faint echo of this *Crucifige* occasionally comes to you from those for whom you have labored and sacrificed yourself, recall the limitless suffering which the Divine Heart underwent in that awful hour. *"Popule meus, quid feci tibi?"*

III. The Modern Hatred of Christ

A terrible counterpart to the *Crucifige*-cry of the Jews is found in the present-day hatred of Christ. Earlier apostasies from the Church took place within the fold of a common belief in Christ, but the anti-Christian movement of to-day is a formal apostasy from Christianity itself. As long as belief in Christ lived in the hearts of the people, they clung to Him as their Saviour and Redeemer, and the dark forces of unbelief could not attain their object. "The entire people follow him," and the modern Sanhedrin of agnostic science and rationalistic exegesis finally held secret counsel. "What shall we do to turn the people away from Him? He must die!" Faith in Him must be undermined, the whole supernatural conception of the Messias must be altered, every divine and miraculous element must be deleted from the picture. They did their work well. Mockery, derision, unprincipled lying, misinterpretations, rationalistic trickery and "popular science" were employed to rob the people of their belief in Christ. And the effort was but too successful. At first only a few thousand, then hundreds of thousands, and finally millions join in the cry: "Crucify Christ! Away with Christianity!"

LXVIII. THE TRIUMPHAL SILENCE OF THE MASTER

"But Jesus answered nothing." (Matt. xxvii, 14; Mark xv, 5; Luke xxiii, 9; John xix, 9).

One of the most touching scenes in the great drama of the Passion is undoubtedly the silence of the Master,—the ever-recurring, deeply impressive statement: "But Jesus was silent." This silence betrays an almost incomprehensible humility, but at the same time a power and a majesty which St. Ambrose has fittingly characterized as *"silentium triumphale."*

I. Jesus Speaks

1. He speaks because continued silence might create the impression that He was unwilling to recognize the legitimate authority and its right to ask questions.

Whenever this point was at issue, before Annas, Caiphas, and Pilate, Jesus invariably answered the questions put to Him, briefly and clearly.

2. Jesus speaks whenever the duty of professing the truth demands it, and He speaks without hesitation, without a thought of the consequences which this public profession might entail.

"Art thou the Christ . . . ?"— "I am."

"Art thou a king . . . ?"— "I am."

3. He speaks when charity and zeal for souls urge Him to do so. He speaks, in order to protect His disciples; He speaks, in order to strengthen the good though weak will of Pilate; He speaks to the weeping women on the *Via dolorosa;* He speaks upon the Cross words of eternal love. *"Quandoque Dominus respondet, quandoque non respondet; ubi respondet, quasi pastor bonus docet et pro creditis sibi ovibus contra luporum latronumque insidias pugnat; ubi vero non*

respondet, quasi agnus pro toto grege immolandus silet." (Ludolf of Saxony).

II. Jesus is Silent

1. On all other occasions He is silent, even though His whole reputation, His good name, His influence among the people and with it His success (for the immediate future) are at stake.

Let us recall the situation at this stage of the Passion. The report of the capture of the great Prophet had spread with lightning-like rapidity. The whole city with its innumerable pilgrims was aroused. A great portion, in the beginning probably the majority, aligned themselves with Him. "He will justify Himself fully," they say; "He will defeat His enemies, as so often before,"—thus they all hope confidently. But alas! He allows Himself to be bound and dragged from judge to judge. In vain His friends await His word of self-defense. What is wrong? Why is He silent? Can it be that He is guilty?"

Even His friends begin to doubt. The mystery of voluntary surrender to shame and degradation is beyond their comprehension. Gradually a change of sentiment takes place. The enemies take advantage of this. His apparent helplessness aids them. The people begin to lose faith in Jesus and finally turn away from Him in a body. Still, "Jesus is silent."

2. He is silent although the accusations hurled at Him are baseless and unjust.

"He is a miscreant."—It is a lie.

"He has stirred up the people to rebellion."—It is a lie.

"He forbids the payment of taxes to the emperor."—It is a lie.

"He has set Himself up as king."—It is a lie.

How easy it would have been for the Master to destroy this network of lies and calumnies, which, as Pilate at once realizes, are utterly baseless and dictated by envy and hatred and deadly jealousy. "But Jesus is silent."

3. He is silent although the whole trial is a mockery of justice and an arbitrary departure from the accepted and traditional mode of procedure. But Jesus submits and says not a word.

4. He is silent even though all expect Him to speak. Those who favor Him long for a satisfactory explanation from His lips; but it is not forthcoming. His enemies fear that He may speak. They realize the weakness of their cause and know full well the crushing effect of His words. Therefore they press for summary action. They are relieved when He remains silent.

Pilate wonders why Jesus does not open His mouth, for he realizes that it is neither the silence of guilt nor inability to speak. He therefore gives Him an opportunity not only to speak to him privately, but also to defend Himself publicly. "Do you not hear the accusations they bring against you? Speak."—"But Jesus is silent."

5. Jesus is silent though He could have brilliantly vindicated Himself.

What a singular opportunity this was, what a wonderful pulpit was placed at His disposal! As a background the broad front of the palace of justice with the winding staircase and the hall of marble pillars in which the soldiers of the Praetorian Guard had taken up their short Roman swords in readiness, with eyes fixed on the crowd below. There upon the balcony is the tribune. Marble steps lead up to the judgment seat, where Pilate sits in his toga, surrounded by his officers. To the right and to the left stand the lictors with their *fasces*. Before him upon the terrace, calmly and nobly, stands the Master.

"Why do you not speak?" asks the judge. Had Jesus raised His hand and bade the crowd to be silent, the storm would have been calmed and all would have listened breathlessly.[1]

And had He spoken, as He alone could speak; had He uncovered the whole despicable intrigue of which He was the victim and mercilessly exposed His enemies; had He vindicated His divine right,—a complete change would have come over the whole crowd. In a moment they would have shouted "Hosanna" instead of *"Crucifige"* and all Jerusalem would have resounded with His praises. He carried His fate in His hands. O Lord, speak! "But Jesus was silent."

6. He is silent although His silence brings down upon Him unspeakable disgrace, although it spells His

[1] Compare the scene described in Acts XXI, 40: "And when he had given him leave, Paul standing on the stairs, beckoned with his hand to the people. And a great silence being made, he spoke unto them in the Hebrew tongue."

death warrant, His journey over the *Via dolorosa,* and His frightful tragic end on Golgotha. "But Jesus is silent."

7. Jesus is silent because He wishes to offer Himself as a sacrifice. Therefore He must remain silent and go like a lamb to the slaughter. "Jesus is silent."

8. He is silent also for the purpose of giving us an example of one of the most difficult of all virtues.

How hard men find it to keep silent! We are so sensitive that we will not suffer the slightest insult. And how enraged we become over an unjustifiable accusation! We seek to vindicate ourselves with haste and indignation. How difficult it is upon such and similar occasions to remain silent or even to possess our souls in patience and tranquillity. That in itself is a great virtue, which can become truly heroic when honor, good name, vocation or future welfare is at stake.

9. Christ's silence unto death has been imitated by thousands upon thousands of holy confessors, by heroic priests who would rather suffer dishonor and death than break the seal of the confessional, by noble souls who willingly bore calumnies and bitter insults for Christ's sake. "Jesus is silent."

And you? . . .

LXIX. PILATE'S POLICY

Let us pause for a moment to observe the man who plays such an important rôle in this drama. Pilate is a man of a strange type which recurs frequently in the Church's history of suffering.

I. The Policy of Indecision

1. *The Good Beginning.* Pilate displays some winning traits. He has preserved something of the ancient Roman sense of justice. He refuses to condemn an accused man without a trial. "It is not the custom of the Romans to condemn any man, before that he who is accused have his accusers present, and have liberty to make his answer." (Acts xxv, 16). Pilate at once perceives the unjust motives of the accusers; he examines, probes, weighs, gives the accused an opportunity to defend himself, and has the courage to state frankly: "I find no guilt in Him." And it honors the Roman Governor that, in spite of all opposition, he sticks to his original opinion that Jesus is innocent.

If in addition to this we consider the tone of his conversations with the Master, which in the main make an agreeable impression, and the Master's calm, charitable attitude towards him, it is possible to judge the Roman Governor mildly despite his serious mistake. What he lacks is the courage to act consistently, a firm character which, having adopted clear principles of right and wrong, never leans to a policy of expediency or seeks personal advantage, but performs his duty as he sees it. Thus Pilate, in spite of his good will, becomes the prey of his own weakness.

2. *Upon the Crooked Path.* It has become perfectly evident to the Governor that Rome has nothing to fear from this Man. "I find no fault in Him." But see-

ing how deeply the Sanhedrin, a power with which he must reckon, is interested in the fate of the Prisoner, he does not dare to free Christ even though he has declared Him innocent.

He knows the fanaticism of the Jewish priesthood and therefore fears that if he does not make some concessions, they will accuse him in Rome, as they had done on two previous occasions. This fear in the present instance was hardly well-founded. Pilate was fully justified in rejecting the accusation, and had he acted energetically at the very beginning, before the mob gathered, the machinations of the Sanhedrin would have been defeated. Instead, Pilate adopts a policy of compromise which leads him into incredible inconsistencies. Listen:

"He is innocent, therefore let Herod judge Him"; "He is innocent, therefore choose between Him and the malefactor Barabbas"; "He is innocent, therefore I will chastise Him"; "He is innocent, therefore take Him and crucify Him."

Does this sound like Roman justice? Pilate entangles himself in a network of mistakes, half-measures, and breaches of justice which have made of his name a by-word for all ages.

II. The Policy of Pilate in Life

These half-measures, this policy of carrying water on both shoulders, this attitude of indecision between God and the world, between justice and injustice, between willing and not willing, is one of the worst en-

emies of Christ in the life of the Church, as well as in that of the individual Christian.

1. *The Policy of Pilate in State Affairs.* How severely the Church suffers from the vacillating policy of so many civil rulers and officials! These officials know full well that the Church and her priests are not guilty of the crimes charged against them, that hatred, envy, and jealousy are at the bottom of these accusations; they would gladly leave the accused in peace so far as they are concerned. But they feel that they must pay due regard to the attitude of powerful parties, to public opinion, to the press, to denominational sensibilities, etc., and thus are induced to acquiesce first in small, then in grave acts of injustice, and finally to approve of the judgment of death. There is scarcely a country in Europe which has not at some time or other played the rôle of Pilate against the Church of Christ.

2. *The Policy of Pilate in the Church.* "What can I do?" asks the churchman who in spineless negligence and with constant regard for his own promotion shuts his eyes to the worst abuses and lets injustice rule in his sphere of influence. He has not the courage to take the necessary measures of reform. It is more agreeable to wash one's hands in public and to sigh with a piteous slant of the eyes: "What can I do? I am the victim of force, of circumstances which I cannot change." Not all who occupy high positions have the courage of a Gregory VII (*"Pereat mundus et fiat iustitia!"*) or of a Pius IX (*"Non possumus"*).

3. *The Policy of Pilate in the Life of the Individual*

Christian. You would not crucify Christ by a mortal sin. But you scourge Him and crown Him with thorns by miserable half-measures and inconsistencies. You are guilty of shameful compromises between God's law and human respect, between priestly duty and alluring sensuality. In that you follow the example of Pilate.

LXX. CLAUDIA PROCULA

"And as he [Pilate] was sitting in the place of judgment, his wife sent to him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with this just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." (Matt. xxvii, 19 sqq.).[1]

1. Claudia Procula—so tradition (Niceph. i, 30) names the wife of the Governor—was of Roman descent, probably a scion of the noble *gens Claudia.* The Gospel of Nicodemus calls her "a proselyte of the gate." Origen (*Hom. in Matt.,* 35) says that she later became a Christian. This is confirmed by St. Ambrose (*In Luc.,* c. 10), St. Chrysostom, St. Jerome, St. Leo the Great (*Serm. de Pass.,* 11), and other writers. According to some, St. Paul refers to her in his second Epistle to Timothy: "Eubulus and Pudens and Linus and Claudia, and all the brethren, salute thee" (2 Tim.

[1] This noteworthy incident is not to be considered as having occurred before the scourging of Christ, for Pilate would certainly not have answered his wife's warning by such a brutal measure. In the present context it also explains the fact that Pilate was just getting ready for a new means of escaping from the unpleasant situation in which he had been placed.

iv, 21). This letter was written in Rome, where Claudia is supposed to have lived after the expulsion (or death?) of her husband. In any case, everything points to the fact that she stood in a rather close relationship to the Master, or at any rate to the holy women, and perhaps even belonged to the wider circle of the disciples.

Claudia's dream is undoubtedly to be considered as a supernatural grace (St. Leo the Great, *Serm. de Pass.*, 11). Its exact nature is not revealed by the Gospel. It was probably a vision showing the fate of her husband bound up with that of Jesus and a disaster threatening Pilate. Hence her determined warning, which plainly reveals her deep anxiety for the safety of her husband, her profound sympathy for the suffering Saviour, and her strong conviction of His innocence and His supernatural character, which was rewarded by an unusual divine illumination and an interior working of grace. The noble lady evidently was a woman of winning personality and a chosen soul. Her figure throws a glimmer of light into the dark night of the Passion.

2. The incident manifestly makes a deep impression on Pilate, for his wife's dream confirms his own idea of the supernatural origin of Christ. At any rate the Governor now appears more favorably inclined towards the Master than before and makes a renewed attempt to save Him.

3. Procula is a type of many noble women who intervene for the welfare of the Church and her confessors. Thus at the imperial court of Rome, a Flavia Domi-

tilla; thus Helen at the court of Constantine, Clotilde, Theodelinda and others in the Middle Ages, who strove to bring the refining and restraining influences of Christianity to bear upon their unchristian husbands and to deter them from deeds of violence by pointing to the judgment of an avenging God.

LXXI. "WE HAVE A LAW, AND ACCORDING TO THE LAW HE OUGHT TO DIE"

(John xix, 7)

I. Pilate Tries to Transfer the Trial Back to the Sanhedrin

1. The terrible *"Crucifige"* has revealed to Pilate whither his policy of compromise is about to lead. More and more he becomes a plaything in the hands of the determined Sanhedrin, which, since the transformation that has come over the people, feels itself strong enough to bring its fight with the characterless Governor to a victorious termination. Pilate with increasing rage and torturing shame sees himself pushed to the wall and forced to take measures of which he does not approve.

Hence he determines to leave the final judgment to the High Court, especially since he regarded this step as the best way to heed the warning of his wife. "Pilate saith to them: take him you, and crucify him: for I find no cause in him." (John xix, 6).

2. But the attempt ends in failure. Pilate's declaration, given, it seems, with a certain determination, puts

the high priests into a quandary. They are forced to admit that the political accusations brought by them present no solid ground for a judgment by the Roman Governor, so that Pilate, from his point of view, is perfectly justified in refusing to condemn the Prisoner.

But they must get Jesus convicted by the Roman Governor at any cost. A surrender at this decisive moment would have appeared as a final defeat and would have been so interpreted by the people. Hence they now bring forward the *religious accusation* which they have thus far held in reserve: "We have a law, and according to the law He ought to die, because He made himself the Son of God." (John xix, 7).

But was not this a purely religious question? Could not Pilate decline to take it up, as being outside of his jurisdiction? No. To be sure, he could not function as an examining magistrate, for this was the privilege of the High Court, but he was empowered to act as criminal judge and executor of the sentence after the guilt of the Prisoner had been determined.

This duty, the Jews would have him understand, Pilate cannot decline, for as governor he is charged with the protection and maintenance of the rights and privileges granted to the Jewish people by the Roman Cæsars. (Jos., *Ant.*, xiv, 20, 2; xvi, 2, 4; xvi, 6, 1; xix, 5, 2). To these rights belonged primarily their national religion and whatever pertained to it. A person, therefore, who was guilty of a capital crime against their religious convictions, must not go unpunished by the Roman court. In opposition to Pilate's *"Ecce Homo"* they set up an insolent *"Ecce Deus."*

II. The True Cause of the Death Sentence

1. Thus it had to be. It was to become evident to all the world why Jesus was condemned to death. The sentence pronounced against Him could not be based upon a political accusation, as the Sanhedrin with their insidious cunning desired. He dies solely for His claim of divinity which he had solemnly made before the High Priest. His enemies, willy nilly, must fall back on this "crime."

2. During the 16th and 17th centuries in England the enemies of the Church also brought forward every possible pretext to make the Catholics condemned to death appear guilty of treason. But in vain. The truth was too evident and even in their last hour upon the scaffold these confessors of the faith gave evidence before the assembled multitudes. "I am a Catholic," thus declared, among others, Blessed Edmund Campion immediately before his execution. "I have lived in the Catholic faith and in the Catholic faith I wish to die. If you consider my religion treason, then I am guilty; but God is my witness that I have never committed treason." Similarly many others.

III. The Echo in Later Centuries

"We have a law . . ." How frequently has not this statement been hurled against the Church of God!

"We have a law which proclaims everyone guilty of death who does not pay divine honors to the Emperor."

Thus speak the Roman praetors during the centuries of persecution—and thousands of Christian believers shed their blood under this law.

"We have a law," cry out the Byzantine Iconoclasts while they lead the defenders of the Catholic doctrine of the veneration of images to torture and death.

"We have a law which proclaims him who does not recognize the religious supremacy of the king guilty of high treason;" thus we hear it proclaimed in England under Henry VIII and Elizabeth, and the erstwhile "Land of the Saints" is made red with the blood of the confessors.

"We have a law," thus threaten the enemies of the Church under the Czars in Russia, thus rage the promoters of the "Kulturkampf" and the Anti-Clericals in France, Germany, Italy, and other countries.—*Fiat lex et pereat iustitia!*

LXXII. THE SON OF GOD

I. The Growing Conviction

1. In the beginning Pilate did not pay much attention to the person of Our Lord. He sees in Him the innocent victim of persecution arising from the jealousy of the High Priest, and feels prompted to release him by his sense of justice and undoubtedly also by a desire to oppose the high-handed Sanhedrin. Thus must be explained his first, seemingly incomprehensible actions.

2. But gradually the Master appears to Him in quite a different light. Pilate senses that He who stands before him is not an ordinary mortal. His indescrib-

able dignity and unshakeable calm, which no violence and no pain can disturb, His noble silence in the face of a flood of unjust accusations, His mysterious references to His kingdom and the supernatural power which stands behind Him, all this makes an indelible impression upon the Roman Governor.

The grave admonition of his wife and her reference to a disquieting dream serve to strengthen this impression. Pilate arrives at the conviction that a mysterious greatness lies hidden behind this strangely veiled figure. He involuntarily asks himself: "With whom am I dealing? Who is this remarkable man?"

The new accusation formulated by the high priests provides the answer to his question. Pilate is deeply perturbed when he hears that this Man, whom he has scourged, proclaims Himself to be the Son of God and that this claim is the real basis for the passionate hatred and the violent opposition which He has stirred up in the Jews.

A sinister fear lays hold of the Governor. "And Pilate feared the more."

II. Question and Answer

1. Pilate would have certainty at all costs. Hence he returns to the judgment hall and has Jesus brought before him for further questioning: "Whence art Thou?" *i. e.,* not: "Where were you born?" but rather: "Where do you come from? Do you come from above? Do you stand in close relationship to the world of the gods?"

That gods in human form wandered over the earth was a conception familiar to the pagans of that time. (Acts xiv, 11; xxviii, 6).

"But Jesus gave him no answer." This silence was more eloquent than words and plainly indicated that the Roman official was not worthy of an answer. Why had he not put this decisive question before? It is now too late.

Enraged, the Governor rises and demands to know why Christ will not answer him: "Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee?" With these words the Governor convicts himself. Indeed, he had the power to judge in the name of Cæsar, but not to abuse this power.

Now Jesus answers, quietly and gravely: "Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above." In other words: a higher power is involved here, which rules the whole earth and in whose hands you are but a tool. I am in your power only so long as the higher power wills it; however this does not relieve you, as a judge, from the responsibility of discharging your duty fairly, and since you have not done this, you are not guiltless, even though the sin of those who haled me before you is greater than yours.

What dignity and majesty lies in these words of Our Lord before His judge! He Himself acts as judge, but as a just judge, who weighs guilt against guilt and metes out to each transgressor the punishment due him. And what calmness and self-control in His language,

which, though grave, shows no trace of anger or indignation!

III. The Fruit of the Conference

1. This conference has evidently made a deep impression upon Pilate. The words of Jesus implied the answer to his question: "Whence art Thou?" The Governor's previous conviction of Christ's innocence is strengthened by the fear of laying hands upon one who stands under the protection of a higher power and, finally, the shameful consciousness of having performed his duties as a judge in a very unsatisfactory manner. Everything is working towards one objective, namely, to arouse Pilate to a last and final effort to extricate himself from this dilemma.

But he is a man given to indecision and half-measures, and it needs but a new obstacle to frustrate all these good resolutions.

2. *"Unde es tu?"* asks Pilate. Hadst thou, O proud Roman, but listened respectfully to the Teacher of all wisdom when He was willing to instruct thee, and hadst thou not hurled at Him the *blasé* question: "What is truth?" and then turned on your heel, thou wouldst not have fallen into the greatest and most grievous error of thy whole career!

LXXIII. THE HIGHER POWER

"Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above." (John xix, 11).

These words reveal a far-reaching and deep-seated principle of Divine Providence and economy.

1. In the hand of Providence even the abuse of power becomes an instrument for furthering God's plans. Looking at the nether side of a beautiful piece of embroidery, it appears as a hopeless confusion of intertwining threads; but turn it around and you behold a work of art in which the thousands of tiny threads unite to form a harmonious and beautiful pattern.

In a similar manner the knotted threads of human malice: the kiss of Judas, the pride of Caiphas, the weakness of Pilate, the hatred of the Jews, are directed by the unseen hand of God and conspire to execute His great plan of salvation. Willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, they all play their part in the grandiose tragedy of the Passion, whose principal character is the victorious God-man upon Golgotha.

Hence, never despair, never lose hope, even though tragedy seems ineluctible. God will ever remain the victor. How incomprehensible must the three centuries of persecution of the early Church have appeared to most contemporaries! To-day we understand that it was necessary to prove the Church the work of God and enable her to produce her most beautiful and sweetest blossoms.

2. God confers His authority upon even such unworthy men as the proud and haughty Caiphas and the weak and wavering Pilate. It is truly His power and must be recognized as such, as Christ recognized it, beholding the countenance of His Father behind His unworthy representatives.

Hence do not lose the faith if sinful and contemptible creatures are made the bearers of high power in Church or State.

3. "All power is from above." Hence I must use the power entrusted to me with dignity, but also with humility and caution.

"Thou wouldst have no power were it not given thee from above."

LXXIV. THE LAST TRUMP

"Non es amicus Cæsaris." (John xix, 12).

1. The Jewish priesthood is well aware of what is taking place in the hall of justice and in the soul of Pilate. They know the mysterious charm exercised by the unique personality of the Nazarene, and it has not escaped their sharp eyes that the proud Governor has fallen under His spell.

"And Pilate sought to release Him." (John xix, 12). It was high time that they should appear on the scene and by a well calculated *coup* force Pilate's hand. Therefore they play out their last trump: "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. For whosoever maketh himself a King speaketh against Cæsar." (John xix, 12).

These words contain a hidden threat of a complaint to Cæsar, by whose grace the Governor holds office.

In the background arises the dark specter of Tiberius. Pilate knows how easy it is to obtain the ear of this moody tyrant, whose jealousy was pathological. *"Cui*

maiestatis crimen omnium accusationum complementum erat," says Tacitus (*Ann.,* iii, 28). And Suetonius: *"Atrocissime exercuisse leges maiestatis"* (*Tib.,* 58). And Seneca: *"Sub Tiberio Cæsare fuit accusandi frequens et paene publica rabies"* (*Ad Benef.,* iii, 16).

The Jews have repeatedly carried their complaints to the imperial palace (cfr. Philo, *Ad Cai.,* xxxviii, 2), and Pilate does not stand any too well in the good graces of the court (Josephus, *Ant.,* xviii, 3, 1; *Bell. Iud.,* ii, 9, 2; Luke xiii, 1). A new accusation might easily cost him his position. Hence the anxious question: "What will the Emperor say?" chokes all his better instincts.

With cruel calculation the Jews had struck at the Governor's weakest spot. The last mine explodes and the last wall of opposition collapses. "And he delivered Jesus to them."

2. Undue regard for higher officials, has, since the days of Pilate, silenced many another judge and betrayed many another office-holder into miserable double-dealing.

3. And yet, what did Pilate's regard for official Rome avail him? A few years later the Governor was desposed by Caligula (Jos., *Ant.,* xviii, 4, 4) and, according to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.,* ii, 7), was banished to Gaul. Some writers say that Pilate ended by suicide, while according to others (cf. Aug., *Serm. 3 de Epiph.;* Tert., *Apol.,* xxi) he died a Christian. In the latter case the proud Roman finally received the answer to his question: "What is truth?"

THE SENTENCE

(John xix, 13–16)

The Roman law surrounds the pronouncing of a judgment with solemnity. Accordingly, Pilate appears in full regalia, surrounded by officials bearing a crown and servants carrying the *fasces,* and ascends the *Gabbata,* which rises above the mosaic floor (Lithostratos). Thus splendor and simulated majesty are designed to give the whole procedure a certain dignity and impressiveness.

The judgment may be considered as consisting of several phases.

LXXV. THE APOSTASY OF ISRAEL FROM THE MESSIANIC KING

1. Pilate feels the injustice of his action and feigns a last attempt to save Jesus. He presents the Master once more to the people with the words: "Behold your King!" (John xix, 14).

The answer is hurled back: "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!"

Once again Pilate raises his voice: "Shall I crucify your king?" And the answer comes back: "We have no king but Cæsar."

2. How hypocritical this repeated emphasis upon Cæsar and fealty to Cæsar sounds in the mouths of the high priests and Pharisees, these deadly enemies of Rome! But this same hypocritical protestation has

been repeatedly used in later times, whenever it served the enemy's purpose to accuse the Catholic Church, her clergy and her faithful laity of lack of loyalty to the state and government.

3. "We have no King but Cæsar." These words express the formal apostasy of the Jews from the unique privilege of the theocracy, which had distinguished Israel among the nations.

"Dominus enim iudex noster, Dominus legifer noster, Dominus rex noster" (Is. xxxiii, 22; cfr. xliii, 15; Zach. ix, 9).

Alas! poor Jewish people, to what a foolish step have your leaders brought you! Only too soon will you realize it. *"Et civitatem et sanctuarium dissipabit populus cum duce venturo et finis eius vastitas."* (Dan. ix, 26).

4. Similarly in later times other high priests and scribes have said: "We will not have this man to reign over us!" (Luke xix, 14). With this shibboleth the Byzantine Church cut loose from the papacy and exchanged the gentle rule of Christ's vice-gerent for the iron hand of the Cæsars.

The Russian-Greek, the Anglican, and other churches, too, have given up their theocratic character and thus sunk to the ranks of laicized State churches.

LXXVI. THE WASHING OF THE HANDS

I. The Symbolic Action

With the cry: "We have no king but Cæsar!" the high priests had made a deep impression upon Pilate.

Yet Pilate retained his faith in the innocence of Jesus.

"And Pilate seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made; taking water washed his hands before the people, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just man; look you to it." (Matt. xxvii, 24).

This symbolic washing of the hands to declare oneself free of blood-guilt was an old Jewish custom (Deut. xxvi, 6; Ps. xxv, 6), known also among other races.

Since the Governor could not make himself heard to the whole crowd—his voice would have been lost in the tumult,—he chose this universally understood sign.

Pages with silver pitchers and perfumed water knelt before Pilate and handed him a towel. "And he washed his hands before the people." (Matt. xxvii, 24).

II. The Question of Guilt

1. Pilate throws all the blame upon the Jews. "Look you to it." But who was it that had sanctioned the transfer to Herod, the mockery of the Prisoner, the serio-comic carnival procession through the streets of the city? Who had placed the Innocent One alongside of Barabbas? Who had ordered the disgraceful scourging? Upon whose conscience lies the shocking public exposure of the suffering Redeemer?

For all this Pilate was responsible, not the Jews.

You say, O Pilate: "This obstinate pack of Jewish priests has stirred up the people, and forced my hand."

"Forced your hand?" Does a representative of im-

perial Rome allow himself to be intimidated by a clique of fanatics?

"But the people threatened to rise up!"

"True, but why did you not intervene promptly? Could you not have acted as did the tribune Lysias, who forcibly rescued St. Paul from an enraged mob? (Acts xxi, 32 sqq.; xxiv, 7 sq.). Why did you not avail yourself of the power and authority of which you boast?"

"But I could not jeopardize my position and the Emperor's good will for the sake of this man."

"But will this un-Roman procedure find favor in Rome?"

2. We will not and should not judge Pilate more severely than did the Master in His mercy. But one thing is certain, all the water of all the rivers and oceans will never wash away this stain from Pilate's hands, and as long as the Credo with the phrase *"sub Pontio Pilato"* re-echoes through the ages, the Roman Governor will be regarded as the embodiment of characterless compromising and weakness.—*"Lavit quidem manus Pilatus, sed facta non diluit."* (St. Ambrose, *In Luc.*, x, 10).

III. Washing of the Hands Among Clerics

1. Pilate did not consider it necessary to keep himself free from guilt, but he did regard it as most important to deceive himself and others into believing that he was innocent.

How many imitators has he not had, even among the clergy, those of high rank as well as the occupants of minor positions.

Dangerous abuses have been allowed to develop; injustices of the worst sort to be committed; eyes and ears have been closed to the necessity of efficient and adequate action. *"Quieta non movere!"* is a favorite motto.

When the sad results of this policy begin to appear, there is a washing of hands, a shifting of the blame from one to another, a pointing to evil conditions, to the *Zeitgeist,* to the Jews, Freemasons, Bolshevists, to obstructionists in Church and State. No one is willing to admit his guilt.

There is an attempt to save appearances, to save one's face, and to deceive oneself and others regarding the actual guilt.

Pilate "washed his hands before the people, saying: I am innocent . . . look you to it."

2. When you wash your hands before celebrating Mass, as a reminder that you should approach the altar in innocence and purity, shall this be a mere outward ceremony with no interior purgation of the soul through contrition and repentance? Are you innocent or are you deceiving yourself?

LXXVII. THE BLOOD-GUILT OF ISRAEL

"And the whole people answering, said: His blood be upon us and upon our children." (Matt. xxvii, 25).

I. The Adjuration and Its Fulfillment

1. *The Adjuration.* It is the death-sentence which Israel pronounces upon itself. The terrible cry re-

echoes through the city and Temple. Walls and turrets reverberate with it, and later, in ruins and bespattered with gore, bear witness to its fulfillment. The cry rises up to Yahwe, the God of Israel (*"vox sanguinis, quae clamat de terra ad Deum"*; Gen. iv, 10), and the Divine Avenger hears and answers the terrible adjuration. *"Obtinuerunt iniqui in damnationem suam, quod pertinaciter exigebant."* (St. Leo the Great, *Serm. de Pass.*, 8).

2. *The Fulfillment.* Forty years later the judgment of God is fulfilled in a terrible manner upon Jerusalem and the Jewish people.

"For there shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be." Christ has said it (Matt. xxiv, 21), and the historian of the Jewish people corroborates the statement.

"Never has a city suffered so much," writes Josephus. "They drank to one another in the blood of the citizens and divided the corpses among themselves." Hunger drove the half-mad populace to the most shocking deeds. Mothers strangled their own children to eat their flesh. During the siege, Titus had five hundred Jews publicly crucified each day, and when there was a shortage of crosses, three and sometimes four of the victims were nailed to the same tree. At the storming of the city, eleven thousand Jews were slain and blood flowed in streams through the streets. The Roman conquerors hacked their way through the masses of Jews fighting in desperation for their sanctuary. A soldier hurls a burning torch into the

Temple. A piercing cry of despair arises like an echo of the adjuration before Pilate. The wish of the deicides has found a terrible fulfillment.

When Titus viewed the smoking ruins after the siege, he raised his hands to heaven and cried: "I am innocent of this disaster; this is not my act, rather it is the judgment of an avenging God." And so it was.

With the splendor of the Temple ended the history of Israel as the Chosen People of God, and the dispersed Jews, with a curse resting upon them, began wandering through the world. Like Cain, they stray about like branded criminals among the nations, and in spite of worldly wealth, remain without a home, strangers among strangers,—"the wandering Jew."

The parable of the vintagers has found complete fulfillment (Matt. xxi, 33–45).

II. "His Blood Be Upon Us"

1. Christian nations, too, have spoken thus when they faithlessly denied their Christian tradition and turned away from Christ. They, too, once were chosen people, considered themselves as such, and proudly looked down upon other nations. Then came the apostasy from Christ, the Sun of their spiritual life, and they sank into misery and degradation. The outward splendor of material culture cannot hide their degradation.

With Christ and Christianity Europe grew to greatness, became a chosen people, the select armor of God. Woe to Europe if it turns away from Christ and crucifies Him!

"The Lord shall take your kingdom from you and give it to others."

2. "His blood be upon us." What a terrible adjuration for the disloyal priest, who has perhaps for years drunk Christ's blood unworthily and thus brought down upon himself this curse! Alas! Upon how many faithless priests has God's wrath been visited!

"Vox sanguinis, quae clamat de terra ad Deum."

*

The Jews at the Wall of Lamentation

Every Friday, with the exception of the Feast of the Tabernacle, large crowds of Jews can be seen gathering at four o'clock in the afternoon at the so-called Wall of Lamentation in Jerusalem, to bewail their fate upon the remnants of their once glorious Temple. Deeply bowed, or upon their knees, they sing a soul-stirring song, which sounds like the muffled tones of a harp and runs as follows:

Rabbi: Fore the sake of the palace which was destroyed,
People: Sit we here lonesome and weep.
R.: For the sake of the Temple which was razed,
P.: Sit we here lonesome and weep.
R.: For the sake of the walls which were leveled,
P.: Sit we here lonesome and weep.
R.: For the sake of our glorious past, which has gone down,
P.: Sit we here lonesome and weep.
R.: For the sake of our great men who have passed away,

P.: Sit we here lonesome and weep.
R.: For the sake of our precious treasures which were burned,
P.: Sit we here lonesome and weep.
R.: For the sake of our priests who blundered,
P.: Sit we here lonesome and weep.
R.: For the sake of our kings whom they despised,
P.: Sit we here lonesome and weep.

And so forth.

But this soul-stirring prayer and all the tears and wailings that accompany it avail naught. The only answer from above is: "Why criest thou for thy affliction? Thy sorrow is incurable: for the multitude of thy iniquity, and for thy hardened sins I have done these things to thee." (Jer. xxx, 15).

Thus the curse of the deicide works its effect from generation to generation.

"His blood be upon us and upon our children."

LXXVIII. CHRIST DELIVERED TO THE JEWS

"Then therefore he [*Pilate*] *delivered him* [*Jesus*] *to them."* (John xix, 16).

I. The Defeat of Pilate

Meanwhile the tumult has grown to the proportions of a hurricane. Like a surging wave the mob presses onward with fury in its eyes, fists raised high, and fiendish gestures. This is truly a revolt.

True, the Governor need but give a sign to his cohorts, and they would hurl themselves against the hated mob. But for this the right moment has long since passed. All that remains is to capitulate. "Take Him and crucify Him; I find no fault in Him."

The resistance of the proud Roman is broken. Angrily he breaks the symbolic wooden reed in his hand and casts the pieces down the marble steps at the feet of Jesus. "And he delivered Him to them."

II. The Victory of Christ's Enemies

1. A fiendish, deafening cry is the answer. *"Sibilaverunt et fremuerunt dentibus et dixerunt: Devorabimus, en, ista est dies, quam exspectavimus."* (Sam. ii, 16).

And why should they not rejoice! The victory of malice seems complete. The great trial has turned out in their favor. In the course of one night and one morning they have achieved what they had scarce dared to hope for yesterday.

They had feared that Christ would once again, as so often before, escape their wiles. But behold, He allows himself to be taken captive without opposition. They had feared that He would override all opposition at the trial with the power of His word. But He is silent. They had expected an uprising of the people in His favor. But behold, the mob demands His death.

Pilate strives to save Him at least from the shameful

death on the Cross. But they gain this point also. His Messianic claims lie shattered on the ground; His supernatural power has deserted Him; His eloquent mouth is silent; all His influence seems gone.

Not one of His friends steps forward in His defense. Some fled, others are hiding. One, whom they attempted to capture, had declared: "I know not this man." In fine, the victory seems complete and indisputable. *"Devoravimus eum."*

2. How frequently is not this scene repeated in the history of the Church! Hostile laws are passed by the legislatures. Every possible means: lies, slanders, calumnies, a venal press, instigation of the mob, is employed to force the passage of unjust measures or persecution.

The modern Pilate, after several weak attempts to stem the tide, has sanctioned the judiciary murder. There is a great acclaim. The news is broadcast to the most distant villages. The camp of the enemy rejoices. "Hurrah! We have achieved our aim! The hated papacy is crushed; the death sentence has been pronounced. Crucify the Catholic Church!"

Or the trial of some priest rivets public attention. Nothing is left undone to make it sensational and to procure a verdict of guilty. Falsifications, calumnies, and slanders are employed without limit to influence public opinion against the defendant. The effort succeeds. The accused is pronounced guilty, and a fiendish cry of joy goes forth loudly from the mob. "Away with these black-robed demons! Crucify them!"

LXXIX. THE ENERGY OF EVIL

I. A Difficult Victory

1. The victory of the Sanhedrin was not easily achieved. But when envy and jealousy spur malice to great effort, no sacrifice is found too great if only the hated enemy is defeated. There is no rest, no relaxation, no cessation of arduous toil. Money, time, and efforts are expended lavishly. No stone is left unturned. The priests risk everything, even an uprising of the people, and throw into the balance their position, their calling, their honor, and their fortune. No obstacle is allowed to stand in their way, neither the proud, gruff Roman nor the mocking Herod. Confidently they press onward to their goal and rest not until they have attained it.

It was a day of gigantic effort, but they persevered to the very end.

2. Such is the energy of evil, the energy of a degraded priesthood fighting for its existence.

3. They are opposed by inactivity, inertia, indecision on the part of the good.

What is done to start a counter movement? Nothing, absolutely nothing.

The disciples sleep, flee, complain, lose confidence, and hide themselves.

Nicodemus ventures a weak and bootless protest. There is a strong sentiment in Christ's favor, but it lacks leadership, a clear-cut programme, courage and

adroitness,—in short, everything that is necessary for success.

And thus has it ever been in the battle for Christ and His Church. Observe what takes place in so-called Catholic countries. It is discouraging, to say the least.

II. The Power of Jewry

1. In the beginning the Roman Praetor with his armed cohorts had looked down upon the Jewish rabble with haughty disdain. Was not this mob wholly within his power; politically helpless, unprepared from a military standpoint? Thus it appears; in reality, however, the Roman is defeated, and Jewry remains victorious.

2. Wherein lay the strength of the Jews, and wherein does it lie to-day? How were they able to hold their own against imperial Rome, in spite of their weakness and low condition? They employed the same means and policies then which constitute the secret of their success to-day, namely, an insolent, obtrusive courage, which brooks no obstacle; the policy of intimidation; influencing public opinion; arousing the masses to revolution; the ever present financial power which made itself felt even in ancient Rome and in the times of the Cæsars, as it rules the world to-day.

3. And now, as then, the Jews use this power recklessly against Christ and His Church, which they persecute with a passionate race-hatred. They dream of an anti-Christian world empire, and this Jewish empire of the Antichrist will come and lead a final mighty

assault against the Church of Christ. Thus Christ Himself has foretold (Matt. xxiv, 5, 11, 24; cfr. 1 John ii, 18, 22; iv, 4; 2 John verse 7; 2 Thess. ii).

But before the end comes even Jewry, at least in great part, will turn to Christ and believe in Him. (Apoc. vii, 4 sqq.).

VIII. THIRD INTERMISSION—THE END OF AN APOSTATE

LXXX. THE CONTRITION OF JUDAS

"Then Judas, who betrayed him, saw that He was condemned . . . " (Matt. xxvii, 3).

I. The Belated Recognition

1. *"Tunc videns."*—Alas! this *"tunc"* is freighted with deep meaning! In the heat of passion Judas did not (indeed, did not wish to) realize what he was doing. The unholy power of evil closed his eyes. But now that he has witnessed the terrible consequences of his treason, and the magnitude of his crime is unveiled before him,—now he understands. *"Tunc videns."*

He may have persuaded himself that the Master would again, as He had so frequently done before, foil His enemies. He undoubtedly sought to allay his conscience with all manner of excuses. But the unexpected turn of events, the savage cry of the mob: "Away with Him, crucify Him!" opened his eyes. *"Tunc videns."*

When he had held the thirty pieces of silver in his hands, the joy of his sated covetousness raised him

aloft above all thought of consequences. But now the coins burn in his hands. He realizes that he has betrayed an innocent man, that the Master must die in frightful agony on the Cross. The terrible seriousness of the situation weighs upon him. *"Tunc videns."*

2. How frequently, alas, have not fallen priests had a similar experience! In the hour of temptation they saw nought but the alluring object of their passion. A burning desire disregarded all remonstances and warnings of conscience.

But now that they perceive whither passion has led them, the whole truth flashes upon them as a stroke of lightning in the night. *"Tunc videns."*

Is it still time? Can they turn back from their frightful aberrations?

II. Contrition

"Repenting himself, [Judas] brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." (Matt. xxvii, 3 sq.).

1. We seem to have here all the necessary requirements of true repentance: the acknowledgment of guilt (*"tunc videns"*) and sorrow born of this acknowledgment (*"poenitentia ductus"*).

Judas is truly sorry for having betrayed Jesus. The image of the Master rises before Him; he recalls His nobility, His power, His beauty, and all that he had experienced in the years of his association with Him, and each recollection becomes a bitter accusation.

He feels impelled to return the miserable reward of

his treason. "He brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders." (Matt. xxvii, 3). He is, therefore, prepared to make restitution and withdraws his agreement with the enemies of Jesus.

He acknowledges his guilt: "I have sinned."

2. What, then, is there lacking for a true and fruitful contrition? His subsequent conduct shows that Judas had no true contrition, such as is necessary for salvation. His is not the *"peccavi"* of the prodigal son, who humbly petitions his father to be received back among the servants of the household; it is not the *"peccavi"* of a Magdalen or a Peter, so eloquent with tears, but rather the *"peccavi"* of a Cain, who cries out despairingly: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon." (Gen. iv, 13).

It is a contrition without tears, without charity, without confidence. It is merely the strong emotion caused by conscious guilt, which cannot, however, get away from itself and consequently chokes to death.

LXXXI. THE REBUKE OF THE HIGH COURT

1. The curt rebuke of the Sanhedrin undoubtedly brought about Judas' final decision. "What is that to us? Look thou to it." (Matt. xxvii, 4). When Judas approached the High Court with his proposal to betray Christ, he was their man; but now that he comes to them repenting of his heinous crime, they dismiss him harshly.

A traitor is welcome to them, but for a witness in favor of the defendant they have no use. *"Tu videris."*

"I have sinned."—"What is that to us?"

"I despair."—"What do we care?"

"I will hang myself."—"That is no concern of ours. Look thou to it."

2. Such, too, is the bitter disillusionment which apostate priests experience sooner or later.

In the beginning they are received kindly, feted as truly enlightened men, and paid for their "revelations." Then they are abandoned. Nobody esteems an apostate, nobody trusts him, but all regard him as a man without honor and of doubtful character. *"Olet."* He is and remains objectionable. And if he desires to return to his former allegiance and to retract his errors, he is despised and derided.

The mob does not appreciate the contrition of an apostate. *"Tu videris, quid ad nos?"* And when he recalls the services he has rendered to them, they retort: "But we could have got along without you; we did not need your help!"

And thus all that remains of delusive hopes and expectations, is the miserable reward he has received for his sin. But alas, the thirty pieces of silver cannot recompense him for what he has lost:—his Apostolic and priestly vocation, the discipleship of Christ, the friendship of Peter and John, the best of all masters, with whom "one day is better than a thousand in the house of sinners."

3. Still it would be possible for the apostate to be saved. Interior grace is not lacking. But the road to the Master is no longer open. He does not find the right sort of confessor, no sincere friend and counsellor. His previous connections are broken and pride,

shame, and stubbornness hold him back. Thus he rushes onward to his fate. "Woe to that man!"

4. Does not this scene contain a serious admonition for those cold, hard-hearted confessors and spiritual advisers who have no compassion, pity or consolation for a poor, despairing soul, but only bitter and cold denunciation, and who send the poor apostate to his fate without mercy and absolution? *"Quid ad nos? Tu videris."*

LXXXII. THE DEATH OF JUDAS

1. Enraged and half crazed with sorrow and anger, Judas goes forth, and as his way leads him by the Temple (where he probably accosted the members of the High Court), he throws the money into the Temple, so that it rolls over the marble floor. The glittering coins have lost their attraction for him. And now he flees down the holy mount, passing Gethsemane, the scene of his foul crime, into the valley of the Cedron. In his ears resounds the echo of the Master's words: "Woe to the man who did this: it were better for him had he never been born." He tries to flee from himself, but qualms of conscience pursue him like hungry vultures and press their fangs deep into his soul. *"Circumdederunt me dolores mortis, dolores inferni circumdederunt me."* (Ps. xvii, 5 sq.).

The past, the present, and the future—all is dark, black, without hope. But one thing is left for him: despair and the rope. "And [he] went and hanged himself with an halter." (Matt. xxvii, 5).

2. In a desolate and lonesome spot outside the city stands a tree, and from its lowest limb swings a disfigured corpse, with tongue distended and bowels gushing out. (Acts i, 18).

What a gruesome sight! Who is this unfortunate man? Is he a robber, a brigand who has met with a well-deserved fate? Alas, no! it is an Apostle of Jesus Christ, one of those whom the Father had given Him, whom He had greeted with the sweet words: "I have chosen you;" a companion, a beloved disciple, a preacher of the joyful tidings, a herald of grace and worker of miracles—and this is his end!

Oh, what a shocking descent from sublime heights to the bottomless pit! "I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven," the Master had said. (Luke x, 18). And thus the former Apostle ends his life, on that same day, nay perhaps at the same hour Jesus dies on the cross and says to the poor thief: "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." (Luke xxxiii, 43). There upon the cross there would have been salvation even for Judas, the traitor. But he preferred destruction to conversion.

3. *Despair* has brought Judas to this tragic end. Despair also leads the fallen priest into the abyss. Three evil spirits wage war for the soul of every priest: the spirit of pride, the spirit of impurity, and the spirit of despair; but it is the third that deals the death-blow. The fallen sinner still has a chance to save himself; for God's mercy follows him into the deepest depths. *"De profundis clamavi . . . et ipse redimet Israel ex omnibus iniquitatibus eius."*

But the trickery of Satan consists precisely in this, that he expels all thoughts of despair and promises his victims a golden future (*"Aperientur oculi: eritis sicut Dei"*), but later on piteously reveals their guilt and extinguishes every ray of hope, so that there seems no escape except despair and suicide.

4. Another consideration. Undoubtedly many, many souls are lost. But only of one has it been definitely revealed that he is eternally damned. And this one was an Apostle, a disciple of Jesus Christ, one of the chosen number of His intimate confidants. "Woe to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed; it were better for him if that man had not been born." (Matt. xxvi, 24; John xvii, 12).

O Priest of God, let this be a warning to you while there is yet time!

IX. ON THE VIA DOLOROSA

LXXXIII. "WHO BORE THE HEAVY CROSS FOR US"

I. Christ's Way of the Cross

"And bearing His own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha." (John xix, 17).

1. Christ's way to Golgotha is an exhibition, a running of the gauntlet, of the most ignominious kind.

(a) Not in vain did the High Priests demand that He should die upon the cross. They knew that this method of execution entailed a procession with military display and the carrying of the wood (*lignum*) by the Nazarene, which would make His defeat appear all the more complete.

It is the paschal season, the *time* of the great pilgrimages, when unnumbered thousands make their way to Jerusalem. They all witness this shameful debâcle of the cause of Jesus.

The Roman *soldiery* gives to the execution an official character.

The *company* of two malefactors strengthens the impression that Jesus is guilty of death. *"Et cum iniquis reputatus est."* (Is. liii, 12).

The *way* undoubtedly led to the crowded thoroughfares of the city, through a great throng of people (*turba multa*), gaping, mocking, or wagging their heads. The *goal* of the journey is the place of execution, a place of ill repute outside the city.

The *wood of shame* is the cross which He Himself is compelled to carry.

His *appearance* is pitiable, He is pale, besmeared with blood, a picture of complete helplessness, which destroys confidence in the hearts of those who had at first been kindly disposed towards Him.

But Jesus proceeds silently and bent upon His way, —like a sheep led to the slaughter, like a lamb dumb before its shearers (Is. liii, 7), as the prophet had predicted.

(b) The humiliation of this death-march is heightened by the memory of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem which had taken place only a few days before. Alas, what a contrast! At that time all sought to come near Him, to touch Him, to give Him a sign of their love and veneration;—and now? Then they spread their garments out before Him and greeted Him with joyful hosannas. Now they make fists and throw stones at Him, as Semei did after the departing David.

Then the priests and Scribes were in an impotent rage and said among themselves: "Behold, how the people follow Him!" Now the hour of their triumph has come, their most ardent dream has been realized. Alas, what a change!

2. To shame and dishonor is added *pain*. The cross is not simply a light piece of wood like that which

Isaac once carried on his youthful shoulders up Mount Moria (Gen. xxii, 6). The beam is at least twelve feet long and sufficiently strong to bear the weight of a man: a burden all too heavy for shoulders covered with open wounds. Beaten, stoned, and driven as a beast of burden,—this is how the ancient poet depicts the victim of this Roman punishment. (*"In te forabunt, patibulatum per vias stimulis."* Plaut., *Most.*, i, 1, 52).

In addition the Lord is exhausted unto death by the previous scourging and great loss of blood. The Catholic faithful feel this deeply when they pray: "He who bore the heavy Cross for us."

II. The Christian's Way of the Cross

"If any man will come after me, let him . . . take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. xvi, 24).

1. Jesus heads the procession with the heaviest cross, and millions upon millions of cross-bearers in every age and clime follow after Him. Each bears his cross. There are crosses of every sort and description, imposed by hatred and envy, by cruelty and injustice, by the bearer's own guilt or that of others, accepted and borne with heavy hearts, but with silent resignation, sometimes perhaps with love and joy in the sacrifice.

Thus proceeds the endless procession through the centuries, accompanied by the Master's exhortation: "He who would follow me. . . ," like a soul-stirring hymn.

2. Jesus walks ahead as Leader, Helper, and Con-

soler. *"Crucis principatus in humeris suis. Christus passus est pro nobis, nobis relinquens exemplum."*

The vision of the Divine Cross-Bearer at their head lightens the burden of those who follow and gives them courage to persevere.

Were it not for this vision, they would lose heart and despair. "Woe to them who bear the Cross, but do not follow Christ," says St. Bernhard. How heavy their cross is!

"If thou carriest the cross willingly, it will carry thee," writes Thomas à Kempis in that wonderful chapter of the *Following of Christ* (Book II, Chap. 12), which has made the Way of the Cross more bearable for millions of faint-hearted Christians.

III. The Way of the Cross of Holy Confessors

Involuntarily there arises the vision of other *Viae dolorosae* on which the most faithful followers of the Divine Cross-Bearer walk to their execution. Listen to the tumult in the Via Appia, Via Aurelia, Via Tiburtina of ancient Rome when the lictors and the *ministri publici* lead forth from the catacombs a group of captured Christians, perhaps a pope with his priests and deacons, or when a great throng in the streets and highways of old London await the advent of a group of despised papist monks and priests, longing to witness their hanging and quartering in Tyburn.

When Blessed Edmund Campion and his companions were dragged to their death to Tyburn, on the first of December, 1581, "two slip-knots were prepared; one

end of each was hitched to a horse; Campion was tied to the first and Sherwin and Briant to the second. Then they were dragged through the mud of the streets and the rain puddles to Tyburn. A throng of preachers and fanatical Puritans ran along and tortured the victims unceasingly with attempts at conversion. Charke (one of the preachers who had played a miserable rôle in the public disputations with Campion) strode with haughty mien and ominous countenance close behind Campion, unmercifully taunting him with cruel gibes.

Catholics turned consolingly and beseechingly to the saintly victims of persecution. A nobleman wiped the countenance of Campion, which was besmirched with the mud and filth of the street. (Veronica!) "May God reward him for this act," remarked an eyewitness.

As the procession passed through the dark entrance of Newgate prison, which at that time was still graced with a statue of the Blessed Virgin that had somehow escaped the axes of the Puritans, Campion raised himself with a great effort to greet her who had once promised him the crown of martyrdom which he now hoped soon to receive.

On many other *viae longae,* to the hill of martyrdom at Nagasaki, from the dark dungeons of the Bastile to the guillotine, etc., faithful cross-bearers, principally priests and bishops, have followed the Divine Leader to Golgotha.

"Vexilla Regis prodeunt:
Fulget crucis mysterium."

saying to him: Depart, and get thee hence, for Herod hath a mind to kill thee." (Luke xiii, 31 sqq.)

1. How continuously these words are re-echoed from century to century, down through the ages!

It is natural, that the Ambassador of Christ, the Apostle of Truth, the Preacher of the Cross, should be accorded no welcome by the world. They are too disturbing to the pernicious peace of pleasure which the world loves.

"Get thee hence!" this is the cry of the Rome of Nero, with all its pride and vices, "get thee hence" is the cry hurled at St. Boniface, at the missionaries to Japan, China, India.

"Get thee hence!" is the cry hurled at the Jesuits now here now there; it was the cry during the Kulturkampf, when bishops, priests, and religious were banished from home and church. It was a war of extermination against the Catholic Church and her priesthood.

"Get thee hence!" may be the unexpressed wish of many in your own parish, as soon as you probe into dark places, arouse comatose consciences, and speak the truth fearlessly and openly. "The servant is not greater than his Master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." (John xv 20).

141. *Christ's Reply to Herod—Politics in the Pulpit*

1. "Go and tell that fox." . . . (Luke xiii, 32). Herod apparently had sent a threat to our Lord, through the Pharisees, that He should abandon

Galilee. The deputized Roman tyrant feared public disorder and the authorities at Rome.

Our Lord reassures him. His activities are not political in their nature; moreover, they would not last much longer. More than this, the prophets had been put to death in Jerusalem, not Galilee.

The incident is noteworthy, for it is the first time that Our Lord became involved in a political affair and publicly expressed Himself regarding the country's head, on questions of personality and purely political problems.

And yet, such problems seemed to lie at every hand. Near by the Temple were the castle of Antonia, the Palace of Pilate, and the Roman headquarters. Every look in that direction recalled painful memories of a dimmed splendor, of lost political freedom. Our Lord does not touch these wounds. Moreover, He strenuously opposes to the prevailing political idea of the Messias that of a spiritual, theocratic, supra-nationalistic Redeemer. He speaks of freedom, but it is a freedom which has little to do with political liberty. He spiritedly opposes the idea of founding a political empire and making Him king.

When the report is carried to Him of the bloody massacre which Pilate perpetrated in the Temple, Our Lord says not a word against the Romans. He but uses the incident to illustrate His own teaching. (Luke xiii, 1 sqq.).

2. The exclusion of political subjects from the instructions of the Master must be the rule for Catholic pulpits. Purely political sermons, which at no

The curious form a lane, while from balconies and towers above, the prominent people of the city view the procession. Coldness, indifference, aversion is reflected in the faces of these onlookers; here and there a sign of pity and compassion may be glimpsed. But no one dares to express himself sympathetically for fear of the tyrannical Sanhedrin.

3. What remains of all the thousands who but a short while ago joyfully greeted the Master in these same streets?

A small group of pitying women and children, who give vent to their feeling; the faithful mother; the one beloved disciple. Of all the priests of the Last Supper group, only one is present. The bad priests are there, the good ones are absent.

4. There is something terrible and shocking about this indifference of the populace.

What callousness, what stupidity, what brutality, what cowardly human respect is displayed by so many Christians when Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is carried through the streets of our cities.

LXXXV. SIMON OF CYRENE

"And as they led him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country; and they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus." (Luke xxiii, 26).

1. The Cross is too heavy for the Master, weakened as He is by loss of blood. But no one comes forward to help Him carry the burden. The Roman soldier

considers this a disgrace, the Jew a defilement. The disciples are far away, and the holy women, who are willing, cannot and dare not offer their aid.

Thus it is that a man accidentally coming from the country is unceremoniously seized by the Roman soldiers. He accepts the task assigned to him unwillingly. But behold! it becomes for him the occasion of a great and salutary change in his life.

2. Whom do we know to-day among the proud Roman soldiers who so officiously head this procession? Whom among the Pharisees and scribes, who, drunk with victory, march beside their victim? Whom of all the thousands who jostled about in this throng? Only one of them is known to us. Simon of Cyrene, who had two sons, Alexander and Rufus (Mark xv, 21), whose Roman names betray their foreign extraction. St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, in his Letter to the Romans, lovingly calls Rufus the "chosen of the Lord" and says of his mother that "she is also mine" (Rom. xvi, 13).

The family of Simon evidently occupies an honorable position in the primitive Church. The two sons, Rufus and Alexander, dedicated their services to the altar. Up to the present day the deed of Simon is unforgotten in the Church of Christ. Every Catholic child knows his name, and his picture may be seen on the fifth station of the Cross in every Catholic church.

The help he gave Christ in carrying the Cross brought grace and blessing to this man; that is the great lesson of this mystery.

3. Quite unexpectedly Simon comes upon the Cross

on his return from the field. At first he regards it as a misfortune; but gradually the example of the Master teaches him patience, resignation, and charity.

And thus it is with us. What makes our cross bearable is the thought that we bear it with Him and for Him. The love of Christ begets a love of the cross. And thus all great lovers of Christ were patient and willing bearers of the Cross.

4. Simon of Cyrene was not an Apostle, not a priest, but a *layman.* Similarly Christ to-day finds among the laity, among simple and pious folk in city, village, and hamlet, the most willing, the most patient, and the most steadfast bearers of the Cross, who often understand the mystery of suffering far better than the reverend pastor or the reverend father who preaches so eloquently patience and love of the Cross, but cries out when it touches his tender shoulders.

LXXXVI. THE WEEPING WOMEN

"And there followed Him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented Him." (Luke xxiii, 27).

1. This open manifestation of sincere sympathy is like a bright star in the depths of night and has its lesson for all of us. The sentiments of the populace were not universally hostile; but the well-disposed shrank back in fear, as is always the case on such occasions.

Only a small group of women, and probably a few children, openly express their sympathy. That this took place upon the public streets is evidence how

sincere and earnest was their attachment to the Master.

It is no small honor for the feminine sex that its representatives in the history of the Passion, where the Master suffers such tortures at the hands of men, appear in a sympathetic rôle. And thus it has ever remained. True, women sometimes participate in hostile demonstrations against Christ and His Church, but the greatest insults and acts of injustice come from the hands of men, the worst of all from the hands of priests.

The women distinguish themselves by their faithfulness and cling to the Church and to the Divine Master even when the men fall away.

Very frequently, women must be given credit for whatever remained of fidelity and devotion to the Church of God in evil times.

2. The answer of Our Lord is a beautiful and touching reflection of His Sacred Heart. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days shall come wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck."

(a) Before His eyes stands the fulfillment of their own adjuration: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." In this tragic fate, which was accomplished in these same streets and houses forty years later, innocent beings, particularly mothers and children, are implicated.

The words of Jesus show how deeply their fate moves Him.

(b) "Weep not over Me." My suffering is short and will soon be changed to eternal glory; but not so the judgment which will come upon this city and its people and will implicate innocent children in the common disaster. Why does He say this? Even these pious women are confused over His apparent defeat. He admonishes them not to weep over Him, but rather for themselves.

3. It is an especially noble characteristic of the Master that all His suffering and shame does not for one moment rob Him of His calm perspicacity and security, and that all the injustice He suffers does not embitter His heart. He retains His sympathy for others while He Himself suffers excruciating pain. How important is this lesson, particularly for the pastor of souls, who must so frequently set aside his own suffering and feeling of injustice, in order to fulfill his duties on days when the sun does not shine.

4. This scene, too, repeats itself on the *via longa* of the centuries that follow. Holy women press forward to be near Him, to show Him their love and sympathy, which is unchanged, even in suffering: the holy virgins and matrons of the ages of the martyrs, an Agnes, a Cecilia, a Lucia, a Flavia, a Domitilla; the noble women of the Middle Ages, a Mathilda, an Adelaide, a Blanche, an Elizabeth: the heroines of mystical suffering: a Lydwina, a Juliana, a Catherine of Siena, a Rose of Lima, and others. To Him they give all their love and sympathy in the midst of a cold, brutal, and indifferent world.

X. ON GOLGOTHA

LXXXVII. CHRIST IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

1. It was customary among the Romans to strip the person to be crucified of his garments (Josephus, *Ant.*, xix, 3) and the fact that four soldiers (*quaternio*) cast dice for Christ's garments indicates that no exception was made in His favor. The loin cloth which was left to Him at the request of His Blessed Mother is a product of a delicate Christian fancy. Clothed only in the crimson of His blood, the eternal High Priest ascended the altar.

2. Silently and without resistance the Lord submitted also to this act of violence.

That a complete disrobing was particularly painful for Him, who was the purest and holiest of men, seems certain. There is nothing that wounds a sensitive, virgin soul more than to be exposed before a gaping mob. The disrobing of Christ was a part of His sacrifice, and Ludovicus Blosius represents Him as kneeling down after being stripped of His garments, to offer up to the Heavenly Father this act of complete inanititon.

When the torturers of Blessed Francis of Capillas, O. Pr., who was martyred on January 15, 1649, at Fogan, China, began to disrobe him, the sensitive reli-

gious resisted, but when he realized that they would use force, he pleaded for a moment's intermission, fell down upon his knees, and prayed for a short while. Then he arose, took off his shirt and handed it to his torturers. The thought of his naked Lord and Master had undoubtedly given him the courage to submit to this indignity.[1]

3. But even this painful indignity could not dishonor the Master. A noble virginal purity covers the Son of Mary, the "King of Virgins," as a luster from on high.

4. From the very beginning Christian ascetics have beheld in the disrobing of Christ a special atonement for human shamelessness.

Shameless exposure of the body is truly pagan, whereas proper and decent clothing is an elementary demand of Christian modesty. If this applies to every Christian, how much more to the priest of God!

LXXXVIII. "HE WHO WAS CRUCIFIED FOR US"

Death upon the Cross was considered the most disgraceful and degrading of all punishments. *"Supplicium crudelissimum teterrimumque,"* remarks Cicero (Verr., 5).

And yet this very manner of execution corresponded most perfectly to the higher designs of God for the present and the future.

[1] Huonder, *Bannerträger des Kreuzes,* I, 48.

I. For the Present

1. No other punishment could have brought out so clearly the idea of sacrifice as Christ's death on the Cross.

(a) Naked, alone, abandoned by all, nailed to the Cross, slowly dying from loss of blood,—it is impossible to imagine a more impressive representation of sacrifice.

(b) Upon a high elevation, with a full view in every direction, accessible to all, is the Altar of the Cross, upon which the first sacrifice of the New Covenant was consummated in a bloody manner.

(c) Hanging between heaven and earth, as the mediator of both, with arms outspread to embrace the whole world,—the *"Dominus vobiscum"* of the Eternal High Priest,—thus dies the Saviour of the World, thus must He die.

2. The prophecies and figures of the Old Testament had foretold it so. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up." (John iii, 14). "They shall look on him whom they pierced." (Zach. xii, 10; John xix, 37). Thus had the Master Himself foretold it: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." (John xii, 32).

3. The Saviour was not to die as a bruised victim of stoning, or sawed in two as Isaias, or in a similar manner. He was to remain unmutilated and unmaimed. Raised aloft upon the Cross, lifted above the surrounding mob, only thus can He give that wonderful example and pre-

serve the dignity and majesty proper to the High Priest of the New Covenant.

II. For the Future

1. There was no form more suited to be preserved pictorially than that of the Crucified Savior. No representation of Him is so beautiful, so touching, so sublime and so intelligible to all, as that of the *Crucifixus*.

2. He remains hanging upon the Cross, as it were, and thus lives on throughout the Catholic world. Everywhere, upon mound and hillock, in cemeteries and churches, in homes as well as in public places, the Cross symbolizes the Crucified Redeemer. There is nothing more beautiful and more touching.

3. As an Infant in the crib He is lovable; but He is far more wonderful and more touching as He hangs upon the Cross. It is this complete renunciation of all non-essential features that concentrates the attention upon Him and Him alone.

4. Here upon the Cross, the Saints sought and found Him, here, too, the faithful seek and find Him. One glance at the Cross and all is clear. It speaks the language of love, which all men, old and young, understand at once. "His head is bowed to kiss us, His heart is open to love us, His hands are spread to receive us, and His whole body is surrendered in expiation of our sins." (St. Augustine).

5. Therefore the Cross, *i.e.*, a large, beautiful crucifix, belongs in the study, before the prie-dieu of every

pastor of souls. It is the picture of pictures and has more to say to him than all others combined.

LXXXIX. THE DIVISION OF CHRIST'S GARMENTS

"And after they had crucified him, they divided his garments, casting lots; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: They divided my garments among them and upon my vesture they cast lots." (Matt. xxvii, 35).

1. The garments (*pannicularia*) of executed criminals, according to Roman custom (Ulpian, *Digest.*, 48, 20, 6), became the property of the executioners and could be sold by them.

In addition to the undergarment, there was the seamless outer garment or mantle,[1] in Christ's case undoubtedly the garment which Mary gave to her Son when He entered upon His public career.

The Master's garments were simple, in keeping with His vocation as a teacher, but they were of good material and so well preserved that, compared with those of the soldiers, they were worth possessing.

2. These garments, as tradition has it, were ransomed by the holy women or by Nicodemus and thus preserved to Christianity as invaluable heirlooms.

The derision poured out over the Holy Coat at Treves is indicative of a lack of that piety which is such a true characteristic of the Catholic Church and which renders worthy of reverence and honor whatever had any relation to the sacred Person of the Saviour. Our

[1] See Stephen Beissel, *Geschichte des heiligen Rockes,* Trier, 1889; Nachtrag 1901.

museums display many memorials of renowned men. Are not the garments of Christ, or what has been preserved of them according to reliable records, worthy of being kept and honored? And was it not a special boast of the Holy Roman Empire of German nationality that it counted this Holy Coat among its crown treasures and that it was richer in such venerable relics of Christ and His Blessed Mother than any other country of Europe?

3. This division of the earthly possessions of Christ under His very eyes is another of the unreserved sacrifices consummated on the Cross. As an infant Jesus lay poverty-stricken in the crib, but He had the little diapers provided by motherly care. Upon the Cross, however, He hangs completely naked and bereft of all possessions, as the great model of complete renunciation.

4. O poor Priest! You lie in the last throes of death, and even before you have closed your eyes, you must witness the division and the despoliation of your belongings. *"Diviserunt sibi vestimenta mea et super vestem meam miserunt sortem."* (Ps. xxi, 19).

XC. CHRIST'S CORONATION UPON THE CROSS

The crucifixion, considered by men as shameful and degrading, became for Christ a solemn ascension to the throne of the eternal King, an ascension made amid disgrace and suffering, yet truly great and impressive.

Everything is there: the throne, the crown, the title, and the solemn homage.

I. The Royal Title

1. Rome records the coronation of Christ in the three great world languages of that time: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, that is, in the language of religion, in the language of science, and in the language of political power, so that passing pilgrims might read. *"Ut omnis lingua confiteatur, quia Dominus Iesus in gloria est Dei Patris."* (Phil. ii, 11).

2. There is something peculiar about this inscription and its origin. Pilate had not intended it as mockery of the Master, but rather as a blow against the Jews. Christ's claim to the kingdom of the Messias had been the basis of their accusation. Hence Pilate recorded it as the *causa mortis* at the head of the Cross. The protestations of the Jews and their rage can not cause him to remove the inscription.

Had Pilate written: "Because He said: I am the King of the Jews," as Christ's opponents demanded, this would have tended to disgrace the Master. But now the title remains which the Lord gave to Himself: *"Quia rex sum ego; rex sum Iudaeorum."* And the Roman Governor officially affixes his signature and seal to the statement and thus confirms it for all time. "What I have written, I have written." *"Ideo Pilatus quod scripsit, scripsit, quia Dominus quod dixit, dixit. . . . O ineffabilem vim divinae operationis etiam in cordibus ignorantium."* (St. Augustine).

A higher power guided Pilate. *"Operabatur divina vis in corde nescientis."* (*Glossa*).

3. Similarly the Church of God. How is not the title of vice-gerent of Christ despised and held up as sacrilegious and opposed with violent protest! But, *"quod scripsi, scripsi,"* records History, and what has thus been recorded, will never be erased by the hand of man.

II. The Royal Throne

He is truly a King who sits upon this throne. He needs no tinsel to give Himself the appearance of royalty. He radiates royalty as the sun radiates light.

His royal dignity. Degradation and iniquity cannot belie the true situation. Upon His bloody countenance there rest miraculous calm and royal majesty.

His royal generosity dispenses crowns of eternal life from the throne of the Cross.

His royal power and majesty cannot be overcome, but reveal themselves in miraculous manifestations.

Hence there is not lacking to this King upon the Cross

III. Royal Homage

All pay respect to the King upon the Cross: the Roman Governor, who bestows upon Him the royal title; the Roman centurion, who publicly acknowledges Him as King; the robber, who confidently implores His royal favor and clemency; the people, at least the better element, who are deeply moved and bow before the majesty of this King; nature, which announces His as-

cension to the throne in thunder, lightning, and earthquakes, and which fashions the unique drapery of His royal throne out of light and darkness. It is as though inaudible angel voices for the first time intoned the *"Vexilla Regis,"* that noble hymn which jubilantly reverberates through the Church of God from generation to generation.

XCI. THE PULPIT OF THE CROSS

I. The Sermon From the Cross

Indefatigably the Master, the great pattern of all teachers and preachers, preached in the Temple, in the Synagogue, upon the Mount and at the seaside, at the well of Jacob and in the inn.

And now, weary unto death, crushed, hanging on the Cross in pain and full of wounds, He summons His remaining strength for a final and most touching sermon.

Is it not a serious admonition to every pastor to be faithful to his calling as a teacher of truth and not to excuse himself from the sacred duty of preaching by every little *malaise?*

Nothing, not even the most agonizing pain, deters the Master from "bearing witness to the truth" and speaking words of charity and encouragement.—*"Vide magistrum tuum, qualiter stat in alto et praedicat. Dominus enim etiam in cruce pendens, etiam ad exitum spiritus non fuit otiosus, sed faciebat et dicebat utilia pro nobis."* (Ludolfus of Saxony).

II. The Contents of the Sermon

He speaks from the fullness of His heart. The last words of the dying Saviour afford a profound insight into the thoughts and aspirations of His soul during the hours immediately preceding His death.

What fills His soul is, in one word, love, only love: a forgiving love for His enemies, a solicitous love for His Mother, a confiding love for St. John, a merciful love for poor humanity down to the miserable robber, and a devoted love for His Father. That in short is the content of His last touching sermon from the Cross.

III. The Effect of the Sermon

To all appearances, the place, the time, the circumstances, and the audience were alike unfavorable to preaching an effective sermon. And yet this last sermon upon the Cross produced marvelous results. It obtained grace and peace for the dying malefactor, consolation for Christ's Mother and for His disciples, a sudden light in the soul of the Roman Governor, a stirring perception and profound contrition in a great portion of the people, who humbly struck their breasts and left the holy scene of the Crucifixion.

Thus, O Priest, though time, place, and circumstances seem unfavorable, never neglect to use your pulpit. Who knows but what to-day's sermon will be an occasion of grace for many.

IV. Christ's Death Upon the Pulpit of the Cross

The Master dies literally upon the pulpit of the Cross, while fulfilling His duty as Teacher of the world. And behold, this very act recurs often in the lives of His saintly martyrs and confessors. The Apostle Andrew preaches from his cross in Achaia, Paul Michi, S. J., Charles Spinola, S. J., Blessed John Baptist, O. S. F., on the hill of Nagasaki, all preach from the Cross, and Blessed Campion and other English martyrs at Tyburn preach from the scaffold until death seals their lips.

Can you imagine a more beautiful death for a priest than to die upon the pulpit, in the performance of his pastoral duties,—such a fate as befell many zealous missionaries and preachers?

XCII. CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS ENEMIES

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii, 34).

I. The Master

1. It was truly a divine act to bring to a world filled with hatred and fratricide, the commandment to love one's enemy. The pagan world knew it not, and the Jewish world could not understand it. For both, revenge was the rule. Do not even the Psalmist and the prophets curse their enemies?

In opposition to this the Master solemnly proclaims: "You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (Matt. v, 43 sq.).

But this new, startling, and apparently superhuman commandment would have been disregarded, had He not infused it with life and strength by His own example. Hence, the Master upon the Cross impresses this great lesson in a most powerful and striking manner.

2. It is difficult to forgive old injuries; still more, to forgive a recent injury. This is what the Master does.

The Cross is raised aloft and then let down into the hole dug for it with a dismal thud. The whole beam trembles, and from the gaping wounds flow streamlets of living blood.

A cry of rage and mockery arises from below. A hundred eyes filled with hatred are fastened upon the Cross. The Saviour beholds the wild rage of His enemies, He feels their furious hatred, and He sees how they feed upon His anguish and His disgrace. Yet, what does He do? Does He, like Elias, call down upon them fire from heaven? Does He curse them? No; He raises His weary head to heaven, and pleads: "Father, forgive them."

3. It is difficult to forgive one's enemies, still more difficult to pray for them. The Saviour, however, petitions most appealingly for His foes. For Himself He

prays only with the reservation: "If thou wilt, if it is possible;"—but for His enemies He pleads without qualification: "Father, forgive them."

"Come down from the Cross," the Jews demand. This was to be for them a sign that He was the Son of God. But He gives them a greater sign by praying for them whilst dying upon the Cross. Thus He unmistakably reveals Himself as the Son of the Father who allows His sun to shine upon good and bad, and who does not desire the death of a sinner, but that he be converted and live. (Ez. xxxiii, 11).

4. It is a noble act to pray for one's enemies; but it is a nobler act charitably to excuse them. This the Master does with incomprehensible love. "Forgive them, for they know not what they do."

He emphasizes the only excuse that could be brought forward in their defense: the blindness of their intellect shall excuse the evil in their hearts.

Did they really not know what they were doing? Had they not witnessed His miracles? Had not Pilate himself acknowledged Christ's innocence? The rough Roman soldiers, the cruel executioners, and a large portion of the misled people, *they* knew not what they did. To them the words of the Apostle were applicable: "If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord." (1 Cor. ii, 8).

But is this excuse to be applied to the Jewish priests and scribes? Many commentators believe that they were not included in Christ's petition for forgiveness. Had not the Lord Himself frequently called down upon them a terrible woe? Had He not accused them of

the sin against the Holy Ghost? Had He not expressly foretold that they would perish in their sins?

And yet His prayer to the Father included them also. ("And now, brethren, I know that you did it through ignorance, as did also your rulers." Acts iii, 17). So far as the Master was concerned, they, too, were to be forgiven. "I do not judge them, for I came not to judge, but to save the world." (John xii, 47).

True love of one's enemies excludes no one from forgiveness, not even the most hardened and inveterate sinner.

As all the filth-laden streams of the earth cannot muddy the sea, so human malice is unable to disturb the peace and calm of the Divine Heart. *"Aquae multae non potuerent extinguere caritaten."* (Cant. viii, 7).

5. This all-embracing, unconditional commandment to love one's enemies, the Master, as it were, carves in golden letters on the tablet of the Cross, so that all men may behold it.—*"Qualis est hic, qui in omnibus pressuris suis nec semel os suum aperuit, ut aut querelae aut accusationis aut comminationis aut maledictionis verbum adversus maledictos canes illos proferret, sed novissime verbum benedictionis, quale a saeculo non est auditum, super inimicos suos effudit? Quid hoc viro mansuetius? Quid benignius, anima mea, vidisti?"* (St. Anselm).

"I have given you an example." No excuse, no justification of implacable hatred, no matter how well founded it may seem, can withstand this example of the dying Saviour.

II. The Saints

And, thanks be to God, this divine canticle of love has not proved inefficacious.

"Lord," prays St. Stephen, "lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts vii, 59). "Forgive them, O Lord, for they know not what they do," prayed the saintly Bishop Jacob of Jerusalem when the Jews cast him down from the heights of the Temple. (Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.*, ii, 20).

And ever and again the dying martyrs recall that scene upon the Cross and beg as did their Master: "Father, forgive them."

The knight John Gualbert, who later became the founder of the religious order of Vallombrosa, while passing with his soldiers through a defile on horseback, came upon the murderer of his brother. The man threw himself upon his knees and with outstretched arms begged for mercy in the name of the Crucified Christ. It was Good Friday, and Gualbert forgave him in the name of Christ. Later in the day, as he knelt in prayer before the Crucifix, Christ lovingly nodded to him. Thus one heroic act made a saint of this young knight. Thomas Garret, while hanging upon the cross, named those who had betrayed him and asked God to forgive them. "Do as I have done."

III. The Priest

1. All Christians are bound to love their enemies, but this commandment binds especially the priest of God.

The Eternal High Priest, when about to present the sacrificial offering upon the altar of the Cross, introduced it by solemnly forgiving His enemies. And you, His representative, perchance approach the altar angrily, with feelings of hatred, with a curse, if not upon your lips, at least in your heart. After a stormy scene in the presbytery or in the sacristy, which has left its impress even upon your countenance, you begin the sacrifice of expiation with the prayer: *"Misereatur vestri omnipotens Deus . . . Indulgentiam. . . . tribuat vobis omnipotens et misericors Dominus. . . ."* And all the while your soul is filled with implacable hatred, with furious anger!

2. The Master prays for His enemies and finds words of excuse even for His blood-thirsty murderers; surely you, a disciple, a priest and pastor of souls, should have patience and sympathy for your companions and associates. Frequently there is more thoughtlessness and lack of good breeding in these displays of temper than actual ill-will.

And even if you have been grievously offended recall the Master's example and pray with Him: "Father, forgive them, for they knew not what they do."

IV. The Church

From the words of forgiveness spoken by Christ on the Cross there shines forth for the Church of God and her priests the lesson, not to withhold absolution lightly in the Sacrament of Penance.

The wonderful words of Our Lord sound like an indictment of Jansenistic rigorism. "Father, forgive them."

These words of Our Lord are applicable particularly to the confessional. Every confession, and particularly every mission with its many conversions, is a repetition of this stirring scene of forgiveness and absolution: *"O quam dulcis in oratione Christi et crucifixorum malleatione erat melodia, de cuius consonantia conversa sunt tot millia."* (Ludolfus of Saxony).

XCIII. THE PENITENT THIEF

"Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise." (Luke xxiii, 43).

I. The Wandering Sheep

1. *The Aberration.* The life of a thief which culminates upon the gallows, is a chain of sins and malefactions.

"We get what we deserve," the thief confesses. He was probably one of those erring individuals whom the turbulent stream of life uproots and casts up here and there, one of those disinherited ones who eke out an existence, wandering from place to place.

How many of these poor wretches does not a pastor in a big city, or the chaplain of a hospital or jail meet in asylums, hospitals, prisons, tenements, and the like! How fortunate for them if, in their last hour, they fall into the hands of a priest who has something of the Good Shepherd in his make-up!

2. *The Illumination.* The thief had not known Jesus before and perhaps had never seen Him. This explains why, at first, he mocks and scoffs with the mob. But the Master's incomparable dignity, calmness, and meekness fill this man with astonishment and reverence.

His better nature rises up and exclaims: This man is innocent. We have sinned, but He has done no evil.

Strange, is it not? The priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the misguided mob condemn Jesus; the thief on the left condemns Him. They all cry out: "He is guilty of death!" But the good thief contradicts them: "He is innocent; he has done no wrong." And yet, this poor wretch had not read the Holy Books, like the members of the Sanhedrin and the priests of the Temple. He had not been a student in the school of the Master, like the Apostles, had not seen Him walking upon the waves, had not witnessed the transfiguration like Peter; he, the thief, sees Him only upon the Cross in agony and in the throes of death. And yet he enters more deeply into the mystery of the Cross than all the others. They are scandalized by His apparent impotence; but he adores Christ upon the Cross as the King of Majesty. "Lord, remember me, when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom."

3. *The Prayer.* There was nothing remarkable in praying to Christ while He walked among the people gloriously working miracles, and was hailed on all sides as the "Son of David."

But now these voices are silent. In their place there arises the contemptuous cry: "If thou art the Christ, save thyself and us."—"Others He has saved, but Himself He cannot save," etc.

Only one man prayed with confidence: "Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." He asks not for deliverance from suffering; he is willing to bear it all in expiation ("We receive the due reward of our deeds"); he makes no demands, but asks solely to be mercifully remembered. ("Remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.")

Oh! How frequently approaching death teaches wandering souls to pray so devoutly that the priest and bystanders are moved to tears!

4. *The Conversion.* This is truly a death-bed conversion. The thief does everything that is required for a good and holy death. He confesses his sins, is sorry for them, grasps the crucifix as a saving plank, and kisses it with sincere devotion and confidence.

And how wonderfully his confidence is rewarded! From the mouth of the eternal Judge Himself come the words of full absolution, a plenary indulgence at death, a certain guarantee of eternal salvation.

What unheard-of good luck! And at what price? Not as the fruit of a life-long, exacting penance, such as that performed by St. Antony in the Thebaid; not as the sweet reward of immaculate purity, such as that of St. Aloysius; not as the prize of persevering combat, but rather as the reward of a single act of perfect contrition, a single confident appeal to God, whom he

had almost completely forgotten. What others gain by years of striving, the penitent thief wins by a single attempt.

Thus, truly, are fulfilled the words of the Master: "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first." The tramps collected upon the highways take their place at the wedding-feast. *"Iste latro de ligno mercatus salutem, furatur caeleste imperium"* (St. Chrysostom).

5. We have here the archetype of those touching death-bed conversions that every zealous pastor, hospital or prison chaplain has witnessed and frequently recalls with sincere pleasure. And if such conversions are not a more frequent experience of the average pastor, may it not be because he lacks the spirit of the Good Shepherd or has acquired it only in an imperfect manner?

II. The Good Shepherd

1. What the Master taught in His parable of the Good Shepherd, He now enacts upon the Cross, by a deed of almost incomprehensible love. It is as though He freed one arm from the Cross in order to draw to His Sacred Heart the poor sheep entangled in thorns and briers.

2. Above all it is noteworthy that the Good Shepherd upon the Cross turns first to the poor thief, and then to His blessed Mother and His beloved Disciple. It shows that love for sinners in a certain sense comes befor that of mother and friends.

Is there not a lesson here for the priest?

3. Furthermore the pastor of souls is here instructed that no dying sinner should ever be despaired of. Approaching death is a powerful ally who has frequently converted a hard and stubborn soul.

4. Does not this scene also contain a condemnation of the rigorism which would limit the operation of divine grace? Is it possible to be more liberal than the Master here shows Himself to be? Is it possible to go any farther than He goes beyond merit and expectation?

Following His example, the Church grants the fullest powers for the dying, opens her treasury of graces, and clears away every obstacle.

Is not her glorious *"Proficiscere, anima christiana"* an echo of Christ's words upon the Cross? *"Hodie sit in pace locus tuus et habitatio tua in sancta Sion."* Thus the Church prays for the poorest and lowliest of her dying children.

5. Still more. What moved the penitent thief to return to God in his last hour? It was the *example* of incomparable virtue which he had before his eyes.

What is it that brings about those entirely unexpected death-bed conversions in prisons and hospitals? Frequently it is the sight of a Catholic priest who is worthy of his high calling.

There, in a neglected corner, lies a non-Catholic or an unbeliever to whom every priest was an abomination. He sees the Catholic pastor going about his duties, closely and critically observes his conduct, how he speaks, how he lovingly condescends to the lowliest and the poorest; he sees with what reverence and devotion

the priest dispenses the Sacraments and what consolation, joy, and peace he brings to his fellow-sufferers. All this makes a deep impression on him. "After all, these priests are different than I had heard and believed."

Thus is consummated an interior change, which frequently leads to conversion and to a happy death.

XCIV. THE IMPENITENT THIEF

The Judgment on the Cross

1. Lest the extraordinary grace given to the penitent thief make other sinners presumptuous and cause them to postpone their conversion to the hour of death, there appears alongside of the picture of the penitent thief the terrible spectacle of an impenitent sinner who passes into eternity with a sacrilegious curse upon his lips.

2. The circumstances are exactly the same for both. Christ is near to both, likewise the Blessed Virgin Mary; both have before them the holiest of examples, for both the Precious Blood flows from the wounds of the Saviour. But the one sees and acknowledges, while the other sees, but remains hard-hearted; the one reaches out for the Saviour's hand, whereas the other scorns it. The words of the Master are fulfilled: "Then two shall be in the field: one shall be taken, and one shall be left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill: one shall be taken, and one shall be left." (Matt. xxiv, 40).

3. This judgment on the Cross is continued through

the ages. There is scarcely an experienced pastor who cannot recall replicas of the two thieves upon the Cross. He has found them in the confessional: to the right a sinner who is truly penitent, turns to God, and departs justified; to the left one who is stiff-necked and hard-hearted, abuses the Sacrament of Penance, and thus allows the poisonous sting to develop into a festering sore.

He has found them on the death-bed in the hospital: to the right a penitent who, weeping bitter tears, clasps the crucifix to his breast and dies a holy death; to the left one who scorns the sign of salvation, repels it with a curse, and dies impenitently.

He has found them in prisons: to the right the wandering prodigal who sobbingly cries his *peccavi* and finds rest in the arms of his Divine Father; to the left one who spurns the ministrations of the priest and passes into eternity with a curse upon his lips.

XCV. THE SORROWFUL MOTHER

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen." (John xix, 25).

Here are presented to us two noble qualities of true motherly virtue: fidelity and courage.

I. The Fidelity of the Blessed Mother

1. As long as the sun shone benignly and the masses acclaimed Jesus, His Mother modestly remained in the

background; but now, in the hour of His affliction and disgrace, she comes to the front and takes her place by His side.

Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrimosa,
Dum pendebat filius.

She stands at the death-bed of her Son. That is her place, to be there her sacred right as a mother.

Though there is nothing that she can do to alleviate His suffering, to quench His thirst, to bind His wounds, she desires at least to let the world know by Her presence that she belongs to Him, that she will remain true to Him even though all others desert Him. *"Stabat Mater."*

2. Oh, how joyful was her motherly activity at the crib in Bethlehem, when the Divine Infant smiled upon her!

And then came the hidden life at Nazareth, where the Boy grew up before her eyes and became the consolation of her life, the sun of her being. How intimate was her association with Him! But now He hangs as a malefactor on the tree of shame, between two thieves, condemned, despised, cursed, and deserted by all.

But His Mother remains faithful to Him. His blood-covered figure is no less dear to her than was the smiling Infant in the crib. Jesus is and remains her life and her love. *"Stabat Mater."* Faithful unto death!

3. How is it with you, O Priest of God? Once

upon a time, in the Bethlehem of your priestly life, the Infant upon the corporal was your highest treasure. And during the hidden years of the Nazareth of your early priesthood, you lived with Him under the same roof, you lingered joyously in His presence. Then came suffering, violent temptation, the trial, the Garden of Olives, Golgotha. Have you remained faithful to Jesus and have you steadfastly followed Him as did His Holy Mother? Speak, have you been faithful to Him?

Eia Mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.

II. The Constancy of the Blessed Mother

"Love is strong as death." (Cant. viii, 6).

1. Since early morning of the first Good Friday the Blessed Mother follows in the bloody footsteps of her Divine Son, follows Him from the pillar at which He was scourged to the *Ecce Homo* and beyond, along the *via longa* to the very heights of Golgotha. Neither derision nor contempt, neither the blows of the cruel soldiers nor the brutality of the mob, which points derisively at her, nor even the poisonous glances of the Pharisees and their oaths can separate her from her Son. "Love is strong as death."

2. *Stabat.* She stands, though the sword of Simeon has pierced her soul, though she shares all the sufferings and the shame of her Son. The Cross weighs heavily upon her tender shoulders, the nails pierce her delicate

hands as well as His, the crown of thorns presses upon her brow, the marks and wounds cause her tender body to shudder. Never has a mother suffered such bitter agony. Yet she stands by Him. *Stabat Mater!*

3. She stands while the earth quakes, the mountains are torn asunder, the graves open, the sun is eclipsed and the people flee in terror. She remains unmoved. *Stabat Mater.*

4. She stands there while He hangs for three long hours in the dark, while they give Him vinegar and gall to drink, while He cries out His last words and gives forth His soul to God, while His sacred side was pierced and He hung pale and wan as a corpse upon the Cross. She stood there, saw all, and suffered all. *Stabat.*

5. She stands, although a delicate woman finely fashioned, unaccustomed to such bloody scenes and rough surroundings; she stands among the executioners, among the Roman soldiery, in the midst of the surging, raging mob, like a rock in a turbulent stream. *Stabat.*

6. She stands, and remains standing, although faced by what appears to be complete disaster and final failure. Though others tremble, doubt, and despair, Mary stands upright with adamantine faith, unconquerable hope, and a love stronger than death. *Stabat.*

7. She does not turn her eyes despairingly away as Hagar did from her dying son Ismael (Gen. xxi, 16); she does not collapse as did the sorrow-stricken Niobe; no, she stands upright, beholding all, hearing all, with eyes fixed firmly upon the Cross. *Stabat.*

8. She does not complain, nor find fault like a weak

woman; she does not murmur, she does not call down God's wrath upon the originators of her suffering. She forgives them all, as He has forgiven them; in this, the darkest hour of her life she places all her hope in God, even though His dispositions seem hard and incomprehensible, and she repeats with a strong heart what she had said to the Angel at the Annunciation: *"Ecce ancilla Domini."*

9. Here stands the *mulier fortis,* as the sacred writings acclaim her, in her most beautiful embodiment, ennobled, transfigured by the love of Christ which transforms all things.

Mary is the great archetype of those heroic mothers who shine forth so gloriously in the pages of the early Church. St. Symphorosa appears before the judge with her seven sons. "If you do not sacrifice to the gods, you and your sons will be tortured." Symphorosa gazes upon her sons, who are her pride, her joy, and her all. Her heart trembles, but stronger than death is the love of Christ. She bends tenderly over her beloved boys. "Is there anything more beautiful than to die for Christ?" Tearless she beholds them put to death and cries out: "Is it possible that I am so fortunate as to be able to die eight times for Christ?"

The same noble characteristics shine forth in St. Felicitas, St. Perpetua, in Zoe, the mother of the saintly young martyr Theodulus, in Barula, the mother of Melito of Sebaste, and in many other heroic women of those times. Even the pagan Romans could not hide their admiration of such magnanimity and strength of character. "What wonderful women there are among

the Christians!" cries out one of their later rhetors (Liborius) in astonishment.

10. It shames the men that this little group of faithful women persevered at the foot of the Cross.

Only one man rescues the honor of his sex, a young priest—John. That he remained faithful to his Lord and King unto death, was no doubt owing to the Sorrowful Mother. He had sought her out after the flight from the Garden and she had strengthened him and had taken him with her to Golgotha. You, too, O priest of God, must cling to Mary in your hours of trial and suffering and tread the sorrowful way in her company.

"Iuxta crucem tecum stare,
Et me tibi sociare
In planctu desidero."

XCVI. CHRIST'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

"When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to His mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother!" (John xix, 26).

True love makes not many words, but it pours out its whole soul in a few. So here. What a treasure of love, consolation, light, and instruction, particularly for the priest, is contained in these two short phrases: "Behold thy son; behold thy mother!"

I. Christ's Legacy to John

1. *Jesus:* "Behold thy Son." This scene vividly and touchingly depicts the relationship between Son and

mother. Apparently His public life had loosened these sacred ties. But no, they remained the same as of old. This is apparent in the Master's last hour. Mary is foremost in His thoughts, she is His last concern in the agony of death. He provides for her future by placing her under the care of His beloved disciple.—*"Matrem suam commendat, ut nos doceat ad extremum usque halitum parentum curam praecipuam esse gerendam."* (St. Chrysostom).

To be sure, He cannot relieve her of the suffering incident to His departure, but He lovingly assuages her pain by commending her to him who was, next to her, His best beloved, the friend and disciple who had rested upon His breast, and drank deepest of His spirit.

2. *Mary.* These words of her Divine Son are His last will and testament, and, therefore, His parting words. The end is near. He departs and leaves her behind. Another is to take His place. "Behold thy son."

True, John is the most dearly beloved of His disciples. He had become near and dear to her through their common love for Jesus and through his steadfast fidelity in the dark hours of the Passion. But that he should take the place of Him whom she had conceived of the Holy Ghost, whom she had borne in her womb, whom she had nursed and reared in unspeakable intimacy, with whom she had associated so closely for thirty years, who was her very life and being,—alas, that was impossible.

And yet there was sweet consolation in the words of

her Son. For it was His decree, His wish and desire, and this went before all else.

3. *John.* The last will of the Master was a particular grace and honor for the beloved disciple. *"Magna ostenditur dignitas Ioannis."*

How had he deserved this grace? Principally by his *fidelity.* Is it to be wondered at if a dying father turns in his last hours of suffering and anguish to the son who has remained faithful to him and stands alone by his death-bed, and makes him his sole heir?

But there was something else besides that made the beloved disciple worthy of such a great and delectable honor. *"Pudicitia virginis nulli discipulorum rectius quam virgini commendanda est. Virgini virginem commendavit."* (St. Jerome).

Thus is shown the way in which the priest can make himself worthy of the love and confidence of His Divine Master.

Oh! what good fortune of the Lord, pointing to you, should say to Mary: "Behold thy Son," that is, behold a priest who is nearer and dearer to me than all others. Be a mother to him in a very special manner.

II. Christ's Legacy to the Church

1. Whatever the dying Saviour says and does on the Cross has meaning not only for the moment, not only for the comparatively few witnesses of His last hour, but for the whole Church and for all ages. (Cfr. John xii, 32.)

Pope St. Leo the Great said upon a certain occasion: *"Nec dubitare debemus, hanc vocem non solum ad discipulos Christi, sed ad cunctos fideles totamque ecclesiam pertinere, quae salutare suum in his qui aderant, universaliter audiebat."* (*Serm.* 9 *de Quadrag.*) This applies, according to the Catholic idea, also to the sweet words: "Behold thy Mother."

All the children of the Church of all ages and all climes are included in this commendation.

2. For the Church is the great family of the children of God upon earth. But there is no family without a mother. Who shall be our mother if not the Mother of the Saviour, the second Eve, she who is "full of grace" and "blessed among women," who was chosen among all of her sex to clothe the Son of God with human flesh, with "the form of a servant," that He might appear visibly and palpably among men; to give Him the body which He laid down upon the altar of the Cross as a bloody sacrifice of propitiation?

Was it not said to her: "Behold thou shalt conceive . . . and bring forth a son . . . and he shall reign in the House of Jacob forever"? (Luke I, 31 sqq.)

But is not the Mother of the King also the Queen in His Kingdom, the reverenced and beloved mother of the whole realm? "All generations shall call me blessed." (Luke I, 48.)

How naturally the Catholic interpretation flows from these basic truths!

Though the exegetic explanation of Christ's words

on the Cross is a flower of the later Middle Ages, the idea itself is as old as the Church, who in that hour beneath the Cross took Mary to herself and made her a member of the family of the Apostles and Queen of the Apostolic community. *"Maria plane mater membrorum Christi est, quod sumus nos."* (St. Augustine, *De Virg.*, 16.)

3. How beautiful is this conception and how fruitful in graces for the Church and her children! There rules and moves in the circle of her children a true mother, with the loving eye, the helping hand, and the consoling heart of a mother, who imparts to the whole spiritual life of Catholics that beauty, warmth, and tenderness which can be found nowhere else.

That worship of God and the love of Christ do not suffer from the veneration given to Mary is attested to by the Saints of the Church, Bernard, Dominic, Francis, Ignatius, Aloysius, and others, with their glowing love for God and Christ. It is attested, too, by the innumerable Marian shrines that witness to a mighty faith in God and zeal for prayer by their thickly studded confessionals and their crowded communion rails. These very shrines are a powerful attestation and a living embodiment of the old Catholic saying: *"Per Mariam ad Iesum."*

"Monstra te esse matrem,
Sumat per te preces
Qui pro nobis natus
Tulit esse tuus."

III. Christ's Legacy to the Priesthood

"Behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!" (John xxix, 26 sq.)

1. The words, "Behold thy mother" were directed to John, and deeply moved, "the disciple took her to his own."

This means for him a happy association with the Mother of Jesus, a blessed commingling of two souls ardent in their love for Him. Oh, the happy days at Ephesus!

2. Should not this ideal relationship between Mary and John be ever reflected in the lives of newly ordained priests, indeed in the life of every Catholic priest? "Behold thy son; behold thy mother!"

3. Between the priesthood and the Blessed Virgin there exists the holiest and tenderest relationship. As Mary gave birth to the Saviour in virginal innocence, so the priest gives Him, as it were, His Eucharistic life. The self-same Infant who rested upon her heart and was her joy and satisfaction, now rests in the consecrated hands of the priest. How differently will a true and devoted client of Mary feel and conduct himself in this sacred action! Surely it cannot be indifferent to the Blessed Mother if her Child is touched with rude and sin-stained hands and, perhaps, shamefully maltreated.

And is not the life of the Eucharistic Saviour in the

tabernacle very much like His hidden life in Nazareth? There, as a youth, He was her sun, her only joy. Is it thus with you, O Priest of God? Mary and the priest meet day after day under the Cross of Golgotha. The same sacrifice which was consummated there in a bloody manner is renewed upon our altars in an unbloody way.

At the *"Communicantes et memoriam venerantes"* is not Mary invited before all others to participate in this unbloody sacrifice, as she once participated in the bloody sacrifice on Calvary?

True, Mary did not stand beneath the Cross as a priestess. The priesthood, according to Christ's ordinance, is exclusively reserved for the male sex. But the sorrowing Mother teaches the priest in an incomparable manner how he shall approach the altar and offer the sacrifice. She stands at the altar of the Cross, not unmoved and untouched like the others who were present there,—she suffers, sacrifices, and prays with Him, is one in heart, soul, sentiment and thought with her dying Son.

How sad if even in the sacred moment of the consecration the priest is far removed in thought and spirit and performs the sublime act mechanically, like the executioners on Calvary, "who knew not what they did."

"O Domina," cries Saint Bernard, *"quocumque iero, semper te in cruce video!"*

This should be the case at least at the altar. "Behold thy Mother!"

XCVII. "I THIRST"

(John xix, 28)

I. Christ's Natural Thirst

1. As all the other members of His body, so Christ's sacred mouth, His lips, gums, and throat participate in His suffering. The torture of thirst belongs to the most terrible which a man can endure. The first cry of the wounded soldier on the battle-field is not for care and attention to his wounds. "Water, water!" he cries piteously with hot and burning lips. Not without reason are the tortures of thirst emphasized among those suffered by the damned in hell. "Father Abraham," wails the rich man, "have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame." (Luke xvi, 24).

The torturing thirst of the dying Messias was expressly prophesied: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue hath cleaved to my jaws." (Ps. xxi, 16).

These words of the Psalmist are now being fulfilled. "That the scripture might be fulfilled," Jesus said: "I thirst!" (John xix, 28).

Yes, Jesus Christ thirsts. The terrible sweat in the Garden of Olives, the heavy loss of blood at the scourging, the long way of pain and suffering in the heat of the sun, the bitter potion of myrhh, and above all the cruel nailing to the Cross, must have brought on an unbearable thirst.

169. *Admonition To Humility—No Humility of Weakness*

"Every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted." (Luke xviii, 14).

1. Though humility is an indispensable virtue for all, it is particularly so for the priest. *Quid habes quod non acceperis?* How applicable to the priest of God! Hence he should not proudly elevate himself above others.

It is true that the priesthood is prized among Catholics above all other vocations. Yet no one realizes as well as the priest himself how little he personally is deserving of this honor. Pride in a priest is despised by both God and man, and the higher the respect for the position, the greater will be the disgust for the individual.

Persons of dignity and position in the world are expected to be reserved, distant, elevated, above the common level of mankind; but the priest is regarded otherwise. Is he not the representative of Christ, who was the shining example of humility and meekness?

2. The priest of God must be humble and manful withal. All self-expression is not evil. Genuine humility is based on truth. We must give expression to the truth in our dealings with ourselves, as well as others.

There is a form of humility which is rather a weakness than a virtue. The intention and not the mere outward form determines the value of an act. The

exterior manifestations will be different in different persons, characters, cases, etc.

The cleric of northern blood, owing to traditions of education, environment and convention, is likely to be, in general, of more agressive personality than his religious brother of the south. There is in him less of the formal, more of the informal, less adornment, more simplicity and directness. He would make no impression on his flock with a weak, unaggressive personality.

True interior humility and an agressive exterior are not incompatible.

3. Even in Christ, our Divine Master, we witness humility and meekness united to a manly strength, in complete harmony.

When His time comes, at the hour of His passion and death, He becomes the Lamb of God, and allows Himself to be led to the slaughter without a murmur. This was His Father's will. He humbled Himself and God raised Him up.

So, too, must every priest be prepared to suffer in all humility and be persecuted for Christ's sake.

But our Lord, whom we see so meekly and patiently suffering, can be authoritative, aggressive, nay even passionate with a holy anger, when occasion demands.

Resolutely and fearlessly He bears down upon the Pharisees, Scribes, and Herodians. To men of good will He is wonderfully meek and humble, but with His humility He unites a dignity that compels honor and respect.

This same thirst moves zealous priests and bishops, and gives them no rest by day or by night.

Oh, what a holy and wonderful thirst is this thirst for souls!

Have you experienced it, O Priest of Christ, or is this holy, divine thirst something foreign and unknown to you?

XCVIII. CHRIST'S THIRST QUENCHED WITH VINEGAR

"Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar. And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to his mouth." (John xix, 29).

1. This drink was undoubtedly the *posca* of the Roman soldiery. According to Roman military law, a soldier was not allowed to take wine while on duty. In its place he drank the *posca,* that is a mixture of vinegar and water, which quenched the thirst without danger of intoxication. (Lipsius, *De Mil. Rom.,* l. viii, dict. 4).

Hyssop was a bitter root the leaves of which probably served for preparing the potion which was given to those dying on the cross.

Was it malice or mockery or sympathy which led the soldiers to offer Jesus this drink? Whatever motive inspired the act, the drink was a very wretched one for a person in such a condition.

How touchingly sound the words of the Messias to His people as quoted during the ceremonies of Good

Friday: "My people, my people, what have I done to thee? . . . I gave you water from the rock, and you give me gall and vinegar to drink!"

2. Who can say what missionaries have suffered when they were forced to drink unclean and nauseating water to assuage their burning thirst.

3. To be given gall and vinegar to drink means disappointment and ingratitude in return for love. Alas! what priest of God has not experienced this bitter taste?

Who is it that gives the Master vinegar and gall to drink? *"Quicumque recte credunt, sed male vivunt, hi Christo dant bibere vinum cum myrrha et felle mixtum, quia vinum christianae professionis vel devotionis miscent cum myrrha et felle scandalosae conversationis."* (Ludolfus of Saxony).

How many a priestly life, which should have refreshed the Master, has turned into vinegar and gall! *"Ego te potavi aqua salutis de petra et tu potasti me felle et aceto."* Do not these words receive an additional meaning in a wasted priestly life?

XCIX. THE MOCKERY OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

"And the people . . . and the rulers with them derided him." (Luke xxiii, 35).

1. In their hate and triumphant joy, they mock Him with words of contempt and derision; the priests and the Pharisees prompt, and the brutal mob of soldiers and bystanders make up the chorus.

The priests deride Him. (Matt. xxvii, 41; Mark xv, 31; Luke xxiii, 35).

The people deride Him. (Matt. xxvii, 39 sq.; Luke xxiii, 35).

The soldiers deride Him. (Luke xxiii, 36 sq.)

Even one of the robbers derides Him. (Matt. xxvii, 44; Mark xv, 32; Luke xxiii, 39).

They deride Him at a time and under circumstances which heighten immeasureably the malice of their scorn and contumely. *"Non irrideas hominem in amaritudine animae."* (Eccl. vii, 12).

2. He is derided in His apparent *impotence:* "Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it: save thy own self." (Matt. xxvii, 40). "He saved others: himself he cannot save." (Matt. xxvii, 42).

He is derided in His *royal title:* "If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." (Matt. xxvii, 42).

And in His *divine sonship:* "He trusted in God; let him now deliver him if he will have him; for he said: I am the Son of God!" (Matt. xxvii, 43).

Usually, when a hated rival lies in his death agony, hatred is cooled and derision is silenced; but here the biting derision is directed at a dying man, the fiendish laughter penetrates, as it were, the silence of the death chamber.

3. The echo of this mockery beneath the cross continues on through the ages! What overflowing cups of the most malicious hate and derision has not the Church of Christ been forced to drink since the days when her children died in the Roman amphitheatre! Ever and again the same savage scenes are repeated:

the poor deluded people, the brutal soldiery, and above all the hate-inspired leaders of the battle against Christ and His Church.

4. The worst deriders of Christ have ever been the Jews. Their press is the most malicious in word and picture. The notorious *graffito* in the Catacombs is of Jewish provenance. It has remained typical of Jewish wit and satire. Nothing is sacred to the unbelieving Jews. Everything dear to Christians is besmirched and dragged through the slime by them. The old hatred against the "King of the Jews" always flames up anew, to-day more than ever, as the enemies see that His Kingdom has become an actuality, that the Christians have become the Chosen People of God, while the Jews are the outcasts of all nations.

c. "COME DOWN FROM THE CROSS!"

(Mark xv, 30)

I. This is their bitterest word of derision. Shall He obey the challenge and give them an overwhelming demonstration of His omnipotence?

No, that He would not and could not do. Salvation was to be achieved on the Cross; this had been revealed by the prophets, and He himself had foretold it. (John iii, 14).

The Royal High Priest may not descend from the altar before the Sacrifice has been consummated and He has sprinkled His blood in benediction over the people.

Had He, in obedience to their mocking challenge, de-

scended from the cross by His own power, would the Scribes and the high priests have believed in Him? No. They would have pronounced this, too, a work of Beelzebub.

II. "Come down from the Cross!" These bitter words of derision will never be silenced.

1. They will continue to be hurled at the Saviour living and offering Himself in the tabernacle. "Come down from your tabernacle!" "Vah, this Host the Son of God? Vah, this . . ."—but we will not repeat the sacrilegious words.

We hear the same derisive vah, see the same shaking of heads, the same clinching of fists and hear the same malicious curses as once upon Golgotha.

2. "Come down from the Cross!" These words are hurled also at those noble souls who, in a spirit of renunciation and sacrifice, have voluntarily consecrated their lives to Christ; the purpose is to shake their sacred resolve and lead them to renounce their vocation!

"Come down." Come, shake off those hard, unnatural bonds of the vows which, like nails, hold you fast to a lost life. Why do you torture yourself, O wretched and deluded fool?

Unfortunately, such insinuations and whisperings are not always unheeded.—*"Quidam pro modica calumnia descendunt de cruce patientiae, alii de cruce macerationis carnis et poenitentiae."* (Ludolfus of Saxony).

But as the love of Christ for us once held Him fast to the Cross, so now the love for Him holds fast those of His faithful servants who have voluntarily chosen

a life of sacrifice.—*"Quidam novitius Parisiensis matri suae volenti eum de religione extrahere, sic legitur respondisse: Christus propter Matrem suam non descendit de cruce; sic nec ego propter te deseram crucem poenitentiae."* (Ludolfus of Saxony).

3. "Come down from the Cross!" These words resound in the soul of a priest especially in the hour of temptation. Once the Pauline *"Christo confixus sum cruci"* (Gal. ii, 19) was to him a heavenly ideal. "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. viii, 35).

But now that darkness has fallen and doubt has seared the soul, the sacerdotal vocation all of a sudden appears to him as too difficult. The world stands mocking, laughing, beckoning below. "Vah, you fool, why do you sacrifice yourself to this silly notion? Come down, free yourself, and enjoy life!"

O priest of God, be not deluded! Do not come down! It were a descent into the depths.—*"Ne permittas me separari a te!"*

CI. THE HEROIC VICTIM ON THE CROSS

1. You enter a hospital or other place of suffering. Over the entrance should be written: "Here pain resides."

We pass from room to room, from ward to ward. Here lies a young man with sunken eyes and hollow cheeks, whose consumptive breast rises and falls painfully with each breath. There a laborer is racked with painful wounds. Here lies a child in a delirious fever.

Worse still are the terrors of the field hospital, where the victims of modern warfare lie with shattered bones, mangled bodies, and maimed limbs. What frightful devastation, what unspeakable tortures!

How slowly the hours drag their torturous way through sleepless nights for the sick and dying, how painful are the wounds, how burning is the fever, how hard it is to lie here in pain and suffering, while outside is joy and gladness!

2. Have courage, ye poor wretched sufferers. One Consoler remains for you. There on the wall before you hangs the heroic Patient on the Cross, who suffered as no other man ever suffered before or since. He is racked with pain; His head is crowned with thorns; His eyes are filled with blood; His lips are parched with nothing to moisten them, His shoulders are bruised; His back is covered with wounds; His breast rises and falls painfully with every breath; His arms are cruelly wrenched out of their sockets; His heart is filled with anguish; His loins are torn, His hands and feet pierced by nails.

"Attendite et videte, si est dolor sicut dolor meus." He can move neither head nor arms nor limbs without suffering frightful torture; He has no pillow, no cover, no physician to call on Him, no nurse to attend to Him. He is entirely deserted and sick unto death.

"You have nurses and doctors," we can imagine Him saying, "who seek to assuage your pain; but I have no one. You are given a cooling draught; I am handed vinegar and gall. Into your ears are whispered words

of consolation; but at Me they hurl words of derision and contempt."

Yet, how peacefully, how calmly, and how patiently He bears it all. No bitter words pass over His lips. He thinks sympathizingly of others in the midst of His own anguish, and even prays for His torturers.

3. Thus hangs this noble, heroic patient in the midst of others, suffering with them, keeping them company and consoling them.

This is the mission of the Crucified Saviour wherever there is suffering and pain.

How cruel are those who would banish from such places not only the "Angels of Mercy," but the Crucifix as well!

CII. THE MAN OF SORROWS

"O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow." (Lamen. i, 12).

1. Is it true that, as the words of the prophet indicate, the sufferings of my Saviour were the most excruciating which any man ever endured?

We know that this was in no wise necessary for the purpose of salvation.

> *"Cuius una stilla salvum facere*
> *Totum mundum quit ab omni scelere."*

It is not, therefore, an article of faith that His suffering was the most intense ever endured. And yet

this question must be of deep concern to every pious soul. For since Jesus suffered vicariously for us (Is. liii, 4 sq.), the measure of His suffering indicates to us the magnitude of our guilt; and since He suffered for love of us, the measure of His suffering is a gauge of His love for us. Theologians and mystics have studied this question sympathetically.[1]

It is impossible to ascertain absolutely the actual degree of Christ's suffering. All we can do is to measure it by comparing it with others which we have ourselves experienced, at least to some extent.

2. Suffering may be measured according to its duration, its extent, and its intensity, which differ according to the nature of the cause.

So far as *duration* is concerned, many martyrs and others have undoubtedly suffered longer than Our Lord, whose bitter Passion did not extend over more than fifteen hours. But we know that a less intense pain can become unendurable by being protracted over a long period.

Also in regard to *extent,* the sufferings of many martyrs appear to have exceeded those of Christ, since they were tortured interiorly and exteriorly throughout their whole bodies.

The same is true of the *intensity* of suffering. The pain caused by fire is regarded as the most severe that can be inflicted. Christ did not experience this pain.

3. In spite of these considerations theologians hold that no martyr suffered more than the King of Martyrs. True, some tortures suffered by martyrs, because of

[1] Cf. Suarez, *De Incarn.,* II, disp. 33.

their duration, may have been greater than any one of Christ's sufferings. But we must consider here the sum-total, the concentrated effect of suffering. Only when conceived thus, does the suffering of Christ appear in its true light.

(a) First it should be noted that the intensity of suffering is not measured solely by the manner, number, duration and extent of the pains inflicted, but primarily by the capacity and sensibility of the subject.

The more delicate the organism, the greater is the capacity for suffering and the pain actually felt. A rough, weather-beaten, horny-handed toiler, inured to hardships and used to physical labor, feels many a pain only in a half-conscious way, which would cause violent suffering to a delicately fashioned organism. Add to this the consideration that the more tender and delicate the soul, the greater its capacity for suffering and the greater the pain suffered by it.

The body of Our Lord, because of its origin, was the most perfectly organized that ever existed; it combined extreme susceptibility and refinement with the greatest possible elasticity and power of resistance, and hence possessed an extreme capacity for suffering; for He was destined from the beginning to be a sacrificial body. (Hebr. x, 5 sqq.).

(b) Moreover He *voluntarily* suffered and *willed* to suffer and atone, and hence all pains made a complete impression upon Him. He suffered with full consciousness, so that no pain passed by unfelt, in order that He might vicariously expiate the entire heavy burden of the sins of mankind, that He might give evi-

dence of His boundless love for us and impress upon us the immensity of His affection by the measure of His suffering, ennoble all human suffering by His own, and become the pattern-exemplar of all sufferers, the King of Martyrs.

(c) If we keep these considerations in mind and sympathetically survey the history of the Passion of Christ, recalling His suffering in the Garden of Olives, the terrible scourging and crowning with thorns, the painful way to Golgotha, the frightful Crucifixion, which because of His unnatural posititon resulted in retarded circulation and oppression of the heart, and the effect of all these tortures upon the internal organism, it bcomes patent that all this, throughout the three hours He hung upon the Cross, must have combined in a terrible cumulative effect. If in addition to this one considers that all His bodily pains were as nothing compared to His anguish of spirit, such as no human being ever endured, one is readily convinced that a more severe suffering is not to be thought of and that the Prophet spoke correctly when he put into the mouth of the Messias the words: "Come and see whether your suffering is like to mine."

CIII. THE HIGH PRIEST ON THE CROSS

That which was consummated upon Golgotha is, as it were, the first solemn High Mass of the New Testament, and the manner in which the Eternal High Priest offers it, makes of it an incomparable prototype for all

future ages. Everything here is wonderfully great.

1. *The external consummation.*

(a) *The setting.* The Cross placed high upon a hill serves as altar, the sun as the eternal lamp, now eclipsed by a dark veil of sorrow. About the altar are gathered, as a congregation, the representatives of all nations, men of all classes and vocations, from the most hard-hearted and inimical to the most friendly and sympathetic.

(b) *The priest.* Christ's priestly garments are the scarlet of His blood; His countenance and mien bespeak inimitable nobility; His hands are outstretched in pleading; His head is bowed in holy resignation; His eyes are directed to Heaven; His mouth utters holy words with a most impressive solemnity.

(c) *The sacrificial prayers.* The canon of the sacrifice of the Cross embraces:

Prayers to the Father: "Father, in thy hands . . ." (cfr. *"Te igitur, clementissime Pater"*).

Prayers for the people: "Father, forgive them . . ."

Prayers for individuals: "To-day thou shalt be . . ."

Prayers for the Church: "Behold thy Mother."

It is the most magnificent spectacle the world has ever seen, which even to-day, in a weak imitation (Liturgy of Good Friday, Passion Play of Oberammergau) powerfully affects vast multitudes.

2. *The interior disposition.*

(a) *The purpose.* Two thoughts engage the High Priest upon the Cross: the honor of His Father:

"Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him" (John xiii, 31); and the salvation of mankind: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." (John xii, 32).

(b) Profound recollection from beginning to end.

3. *"Pro Christo legatione fungimur"* (2 Cor. v, 20). This is nowhere so true as at the altar. There you are truly like the Great High Priest upon the Cross. *"Ego exemplum dedi vobis"* (John xiii, 15).

CIV. SENTIMENTS AT THE ALTAR

1. Christ, the Eternal High Priest upon the altar of the Cross, is and remains the great model of the priest at the unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of the New Covenant. This thought can elevate, but it can also depress. The crying contrast between the majesty of the action and the occasionally wretched condition and mood of the priest at the altar is a shrill and raucous dissonance that disturbs the soul.

True, frequently this is but the result of guiltless human weakness, and even the most saintly priest now and then experiences such dark and joyless hours at the altar, which otherwise *laetificat iuventutem suam.*

2. At such times there is a thought that may console us. Even the eternal High Priest experienced no consolation during His holy sacrifice on the Cross, but rather completed it in depressing fatigue and in the weakness of the dying. All sensible consolation was denied Him and elevated sentiments, the *élan* of the

spirit which one unconsciously unites with this sacred act, were entirely wanting.

The Mass which He celebrated upon the altar of the Cross bears throughout the marks of a sacrifice. Is it not then perfectly befitting that the priest should at times experience this same feeling of aridity.

3. But as the Lord fights against these sentiments and, in spite of His intense suffering, neglects nothing, omits nothing, but preserves His majestic calmness, utters every word reverently and completes every act, even to the last *"Ite missa est,"* with incomparable dignity, so also the priest should not allow himself to be dejected in times of sorrow. The Cross surmounts the altar not merely as a symbol or decoration, but as a living reminder of that first bloody sacrifice upon Golgotha, which is renewed upon our altars.

CV. THE DARKNESS

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth, until the ninth hour." (Matt. xxvii, 45).

I. The "Sign in the Heavens"

The scribes and Pharisees had demanded a sign from heaven to authenticate Our Lord. This sign now appears and fills them with terror. Though it was merely an eclipse of the sun, it occasioned dismay because it came unannounced and suddenly. It resembled the intervention of a preternatural power.

The darkness must in this instance have been all the more terrifying, as it apparently had some connection with the events on the Cross and a natural eclipse of the sun was out of the question.[1]

Among the Jews a sudden darkness had always been considered as a sign of divine anger.

"And I will cover the heavens . . . , and I will make the stars thereof dark. . . . I will make all the lights of heaven to mourn over thee, and I will cause darkness upon thy land." (Ez. xxxii, 7 sqq.; cfr. Is. xiii, 9 sq.; Amos viii, 9; Joel ii, 10).

II. The Dark Curtain

1. The spectacle of the Saviour battling with death upon the Cross was apt to encourage His enemies and to discourage and mislead His friends. But behold! Suddenly the Cross upon the mountain becomes the center of a tremendous cosmic phenomenon. A dark curtain is drawn before the altar of the Cross and hides the inner sanctuary from profane eyes. This threaten-

[1] It was Easter, and hence the time of the full moon. Besides, an ordinary solar eclipse is of but short duration. The eclipse recorded by the Gospel continued for three hours. According to the opinion of many Fathers and theologians (cfr. St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, IIIa, qu. 44, art. 2, 2), this eclipse extended over the whole earth. They refer to Tertullian (*Apol.*, xxi): *"Et eum mundi casum in archivis vestris habetis"* (cfr. Eusebius, Orosius, *et al.*), and consider it proper that a world event, such as the death of Christ, should be announced to all nations by a sign which would provoke thought and inquiry. A higher power is in evidence; Heaven is angry, a sentence of punishment is about to be announced.

ing sign from Heaven depresses the enemies of Jesus and powerfully knocks at their conscience.

2. But this impression disappears with the returning daylight. It is likewise with many a priest. He is disturbed in his sinful ways at times by some threatening natural phenomenon, even if it be only a violent thunder-storm, but only too soon he falls back into a sense of false security and continues in his sinful habits.

III. The Veiling of the Sun of Grace

1. Jesus was the light of the world and in a special manner the sun of Israel. But "men loved darkness rather than the light" and closed their eyes to Him (John iii, 19). Thus the Light of Heaven was withdrawn from the Land of Promise, and darkness fell upon city and country, as a sign that the Sun of Grace had set.

2. Will it ever rise again for the unfortunate Jews? *"Omnipotens sempiterne Deus,"* the Church pleads on Good Friday, *"qui etiam Iudaicam perfidiam a tua misericordia non repellis, exaudi preces nostras, quas pro illius populi obcaecatione deferimus, ut agnita veritatis tuae luce, quae Christus est, a suis tenebris eruantur. Per eundem Dominum, . . . Amen."*

CVI. THE ABANDONMENT OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

I. Jesus Deserted by Men Upon the Cross

1. To be deserted is one of the bitterest experiences of human life. What is more pitiable than an aban-

doned child, a helpless man, a faithlessly deserted king? (Lear).

Doubly and trebly painful it is for a high-minded philanthropist to be deserted,—one who has lived, labored, and suffered for others and is now abandoned by them. It is still worse when, because of wicked calumnies, your friends turn away from you, shun you, and no longer exchange greetings with you. This dour fate Christ experienced on the Cross in all its bitterness. *"Me dereliquerunt fontem aquae vivae."* (Jer. ii, 13).

2. The Lord is abandoned:

(a) *By His Apostles and disciples.* Where are Peter, Jacob, Andrew, Philip, and the others, whom He loved so tenderly, who basked in His love and renown? Where are the disciples who once were proud to call Him Master? They keep aloof from Him and deny their former relationship to Him. "Behold, the hour cometh, and it is now come, that you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." (John xvi, 32).

(b) *By His people,* who once acclaimed Him so joyfully, upon whom He heaped so many benefits. They have turned from Him and avoid Him as one stricken with leprosy. *"Nos putavimus eum tanquam leprosum, tanquam percussum a Deo."* (Is. liii, 4).

(c) *By the children,* who were so eager to linger in His presence and who but a short while ago joined in the joyous acclaim that welcomed Him upon His entry into Jerusalem. Their young hearts have been

estranged from Him, and with doubting eyes they timidly behold the horrible spectacle of the Crucifixion. Jesus has been pointed out to them as a malefactor and they have perhaps united with the others in demanding: "Away with Him, crucify Him!"

(d) *By the rulers,* whose duty it was to investigate the charges brought against the Master and to take their stand on the side of innocence and justice. The *spiritual* rulers had demanded His death and incited the mob against Him. Even Nicodemus no longer ventured to protest. The *civil* rulers, in whose hands the decision lay, weakly abandoned Him to His enemies, although they recognized and had publicly proclaimed His innocence.

Even one of the two *robbers* who were associated with Him against their will deserts Him with a curse. But one man takes His part—the penitent thief, whose voice is the only one raised in His behalf.

But no,—*a little group* consisting of His Mother, His beloved disciple John, and a few holy women remain true to Him and persevere to the end. This is all that remains to Him, and the smallness of the group strikingly accentuates His abandonment.

The history of Gedeon repeats itself in the Passion of Christ. Of the many thousands who departed with Gedeon, ready to give battle, five hundred turned back at Mount Galaad, and of the remaining eleven thousand but three hundred remained at the brook Harad. Thus the hour of suffering operates as a process of selection and probation. Only a few stand the test.

At the Last Supper, with its sweet and holy teachings and graces, all the Apostles are present. In the Garden of Olives a sifting takes place. Eleven follow Jesus to the entrance of Gethsemane, only three to the grotto of agony, only one to the Cross upon Golgotha.

And now even the *light of the sun* deserts Him. Darkness engulfs Him. Thus He hangs there—a picture of complete abandonment.

II. The Abandonment of Jesus in the Tabernacle

Does not this abandonment renew itself daily in the Eucharistic life of Our Lord? There, too, He is but too frequently abandoned:

1. *By His best friends,* the priests, who for days and days have no time for Him. They hold their accustomed gatherings, now here, now there, and "have a good time." No one objects to this, but it is sad if not one of them, on arriving or leaving, thinks of paying a short visit to the Lord in the Tabernacle.

Or, perhaps, it is a patronal feast or a Forty Hours' Devotion. The people stream to the House of God all day long. And the clergy? They appear at the appointed time for regular services, but that is all. The spirit of solid piety is lacking. "You shall leave me alone." (John xvi, 32).

2. *Deserted by the People.* A Church raises its pinnacles aloft in the heart of a large city. A constant stream of humanity passes its portals. They are busily engaged in the pursuit of their business, but

scarcely one out of a thousand thinks of Him who resides within the temple.

3. *Abandoned by the children,* of whom many are so estranged from Him that they do not know Him even on Sundays and holydays.

4. *Deserted by the rulers,* who are ashamed publicly to acknowledge Him and to march beneath His banner.

5. *Deserted by numberless apostates,* who have broken with Him and His Church and hold themselves aloof in enmity, if not in scorn.

CVII. JESUS DESERTED BY GOD

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii, 46).

I. The Cry of Abandonment

1. This cry is the first verse of the twenty-first Messianic psalm, which the High Priest on the Cross intones in a loud voice (*"exclamavit voce magna"*). That Christ recites a verse from the Psalms indicates that it is not an involuntary exclamation of despairing weakness, but that this particular Psalm is peculiarly adapted to the sentiments that fill His heart.

The Psalm in question is the touching expression of a strong but deeply moved soul, which presents to God its abandonment and pleads for help.

We have here an example of how the Master uses the Psalms in prayer. He associates the sentiments they express with His own.

2. The Lord cries for help, but His Father in Heaven does not for the present intervene. There is no lightning, no ray of light, no cry, no angel, no sign of sympathy, but it appears as if the Crucified Saviour were abandoned by God.

Isaias had vividly drawn His picture: "We have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted." (Is. liii, 4). And David described this abandonment: "But I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn: they have spoken with the lips, and wagged the head: He hoped in the Lord, let him deliver him: let him save him, seeing he delighteth in him," etc. (Ps. xxi, 7 sqq.).

Is not this, almost word for word, identical with what the enemies of Christ derisively cry out at the foot of the Cross? If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in him." (Matt. xxvii, 42).

How remarkably these prophecies are fulfilled![1]

3. Who can express what the Heart of our Saviour suffered in these three long hours of silent anguish and darkness on the Cross? He is truly a picture of complete abandonment.

[1] It was customary among the Jews to remember the Psalms by their introductory words. According to some commentators, the Lord recited this Psalm, in part audibly, in part *sotto voce,* in order to call to the attention of the assembled priests and scribes, who recognized the Messianic character of this Psalm, the remarkable agreement between the prophecy and His passion.

His loud cry sounds like a continuation of His pleading prayer in the Garden of Olives, only it is more serious and discloses an agony of soul which mounts to nameless heights in the dark night of suffering upon Golgotha.—*"Qui devote considerat, ex quam anxio gemitu, ex quam alto singultu, ex quam profundo luctu, ex quam amaro planctu haec vox in cruce proruperit ex ore Domini Iesu, nullus est, si haberet pectus ferreum, quin molliretur compunctione."* (Ludolfus of Saxony).

II. The Feeling of Being Abandoned by God

1. To feel oneself abandoned is not the same as to be actually abandoned. Divinity and humanity are inseparably united in Christ. But there is no contradiction between this fact and the statement that the Lord in His human nature experienced the feeling of abandonment in all its bitterness. He includes in His programme of suffering every pain of humanity, in order to sanctify them all by His example. Hence he suffers also the greatest, deepest, and bitterest of all the sorrows which can lay hold upon a human soul, namely, the feeling of being abandoned by God. *"Derelictus est, ne nos derelinqueremur."* St. Cyprian).

2. This feeling of being abandoned by God belongs to the most harrowing experiences of even the greatest Saints. St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis Xavier, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, St. Angela of Foligno, St. Francis de Sales, St. Frances of Chantal,

and many others have experienced hours of complete dereliction and interior abandonment,—hours during which all the lights in Heaven seemed extinguished and the sun of their souls appeared to be eclipsed and enveloped in eternal night.

And yet God had not abandoned them. He merely put their faith and fidelity to a test, from which they emerged newly strengthened, purer, and holier than before. *"Tentavit eos* [*Dominus*] *et invenit illos dignos se."* (Wisd. iii, 5).

CVIII. THE ABANDONMENT OF THE CHURCH AND HER PRIESTS

I. The Church

1. For the Church, too, for the vicegerent of Christ, for bishops and priests there come hours of deepest sorrow and depression. The triumphant ferocity of the enemy becomes so great that it appears as if God had actually deserted and abandoned His Church. The mystical body of Christ, the Church, too, hangs, like His real body, in death agony upon the Cross, exposed to the public view in shame and sorrow, despised and derided by a God-forsaken world for her faith, her hope, and her exalted claims.

"She is done for!" her enemies shout derisively and the cry is re-echoed by the misled masses. Even the most wretched scoundrel joins in the chorus and contemptuously mocks the "ancient superstition." Only

a small group of faithful adherents stand at a distance, dismayed and helplessly bemoaning her fate.

God, too, is silent. All prayers seem to go unanswered. Heaven remains grey and closed to all entreaties. God does not interfere, He sends no angel as in the days of Sennacherib. Not a word, not a sign.

How frequently have not such periods of extreme discouragement come over the Church, when malice seemed to triumph, when glowing truths appeared to evaporate, when the rich treasures of the faith seemed carried away by a raging flood, and the Church cried out in deepest anguish: "My God, my God, why hast Thou abandoned me?"

2. In such extremities there arises before her the consoling image of the deserted Saviour on the Cross. Who appears more utterly deserted and helpless than Jesus, and yet He is not defeated. On the contrary, the hour of His triumph is near. *Regnavit a ligno Deus.*

Thus must the "Man of Sorrows" hang upon the Cross. The very things which seemed destined to depress and obscure Him, become witnesses to the truth of His claims. Thus and not otherwise had the prophet visioned Him.

What He suffered and endured His Church, too, was to suffer and endure. He Himself foretold it, and hence the fulfillment must not terrify her.

It was necessary for Christ to suffer and thus enter into His glory. Does not this apply also to the Church?

II. Priests

The soul of the priest, too, can be plunged into darkness.

1. It may be dark in *life*. All lights go out and everything seems submerged in a starless night. To bear up in such hours and to persevere, though it is night, is truly heroic.

2. Darkness can overtake the priest *in the hour of death*. The eyes grow dim, shadows arise out of the valley, earthly dreams vanish, and darkness begins to fall round about.

Abandon me not in that dread hour, O my Saviour and Redeemer! *"In hora mortis meae voca me!"*

3. "My God, my God, why hast thou abandoned me?" Woe, if these words should ever become literally true in the mouth of a dying priest and he should pass despairingly into eternity! *"Ne permittas me separari a te!"*

CIX. "IT IS CONSUMMATED"

(John xix, 30)

The Lord feels that the end is near. Wholly recollected within Himself, He surveys His life from the crib to the Cross. What a marvelous career lies between these two termini!

"Father, . . . I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John xvii, 4). Thus the Master had prayed at the Last Supper.

Now He can repeat these words in fullest truth, since He has completed the most difficult part of His mission, His bitter Passion. And so He cries out: "It is consummated!"

1. *Consummated in the great work of Redemption.* The Father has accepted the vicarious atonement of His beloved Son.

"For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting." (John iii, 16).

And the Son has paid the price of redemption fully and completely. He has blotted out the decree of punishment by "fastening it to the cross." (Col. ii, 14).

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver . . . , but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled." (1 Peter i, 18 sq.).—"Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

The portals of Heaven which were closed, are again open, the new covenant of mercy between God and man is sealed in blood; the new kingdom of grace and truth arises. On the Cross "justice and peace hath kissed" (Ps. lxxxiv, 11). A stream of grace springs up at the foot of the Cross and runs down the mountain, out over all lands and peoples.

2. *Fulfilled are all the prophesies and figures of the Old Testament.*

(a) How touching was the scene which was once enacted upon the green peak of Mount Moria (Gen. xxii)! It was a figure, a faint indication of the divine tragedy on Golgotha. But here on Golgotha the Father

actually allows His only begotten Son to bleed to death under the sacrificial knife, and no angel intervenes to stay the mortal blow. The knife of sacrifice gleams, the blood of the Victim flows, His countenance grows pale, His eyes break in death. Dead and pale the only begotten Son lies upon the altar.

(b) Another picture: at the foot of Mount Hor glimmers the tented city of Israel. Round about in the distance stretch the sands of the desert in the rays of the burning sun. Suddenly the inhabitants flee hither and thither before the serpents which come forth from crevices and subterranean caverns. Hissing and with wide open mouths they pursue their victims. Piercing cries of help, despair and suffering rend the heavens, while on all sides lie the dying and the dead.

Then there appears in the distance the saving image of the bronze serpent, lifted up by Moses. A thousand arms are outstretched pleading for mercy. The deadly vipers flee. A joyful hymn of thanks resounds through the desert. It is a grandiose spectacle, which, however, becomes still grander and of world-wide significance in its fulfillment on Golgotha.

In place of the bronze serpent the Son of God hangs upon the Cross, immersed into the misery and suffering of humanity.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, may have life everlasting." (John iii, 14 sq.).

The priest of God stands at the altar of the New Testament and raises up the White Host that all may

see it. And millions who kneel round about, weary wanderers in the desert of life, pursued and threatened by the vipers of sin, lift their eyes confidently and plead: "Jesus, have mercy on us; Jesus, hear us!"

3. *It is consummated,* that is, the Master's suffering is ended.

Those were immeasurably dark hours of suffering, such as no mortal ever experienced. But, thanks be to God, it is all over now and the dawn of the eternal day appears on the edge of the dark night.

"And I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now glorify thou me, O Father, with thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with thee." (John xvii, 4 sq.).

Oh! how short are these sixteen hours of intense agony, these three hours on Golgotha, in comparison with an eternity of glory!

4. *It is consummated, that is, the thirty-three years of the earthly life of Our Lord have come to an end.*

Once more the dying Saviour casts a glance backward upon these thirty-three years—full years in the highest sense of the word,—and once again He surveys His life.

There, not far away, in the hills of Judea, He beholds Bethlehem, where He lay as a newborn babe in the stable. Now He hangs naked upon the hard wood of the Cross. Behold, how like the beginning and the end are to each other and how, in spite of all differences, they unite to form a symphony of sacrifice.

To the northward, in Galilee, He beholds the peace-

ful hamlet of Nazareth, the scene of His hidden life. *"Descendit in Nazareth—ascendit in crucem."* Lonely and quiet it was there; here it is even more lonely and quiet. And the Mother who nursed Him there, again stands by His side.

Up there are Lake Genesareth, the hills and valleys, the highways and byways over which He traveled, teaching and working miracles. And wherever He set foot, flowers of grace and mercy sprang up. *"Transiit benefaciendo . . ."* All this is now past. "It is consummated."

What a glorious finale to a glorious life!

CX. THE "CONSUMMATUM EST" OF THE DYING PRIEST

Everything depends upon the end, upon the consummation. "All's well that ends well." Of what avail are the beautiful beginnings of a young priestly life if the continuation and the end do not correspond to them,—if the seal of the *consummatum est* is lacking?

"Non est praemium in inchoatione, sed in consummatione. Non datur denarius incipientibus, sed finientibus et corona non currentibus, sed pervenientibus" (Ludolfus of Saxony).

I. The "Consummatum est" of the Good Priest

"Non est praemium in inchoatione, sed in consummatione." It is the end of an apostolic life, not its beginning, which counts most.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just judge will render to me in that day." (2 Tim. iv, 7 sq.).

"Consummatum est," breathes St. Francis Xavier on his deathbed in Sancian, where his remarkable life was coming to a worthy end.

"Consummatum est," speaks St. Aloysius with glowing eyes. *"Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa"* (Wisd. iv, 13) applies in fullest measure to him who considered all things in the light of eternity.

"Consummatum est," thus may confidently exclaim many a dying priest and missionary who has labored and exhausted himself in the service of His Lord and Master.

There is no more beautiful death than the death of exhaustion in the service of God and the Church,—to die as a victim to duty and to the sacerdotal vocation.

"Blessed the dead, who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow them." (Apoc. xiv, 13).

II. The "Consummatum est" of the Bad and Lukewarm Priest

How sad it is when a priest in his dying hour is unable to exclaim: *"Consummatum est!"* because he recognizes with terror that nothing in his life has been completed, but that everything remains miserably

unfinished. A thousand resolutions,—none of them fulfilled; a thousand plans,—none of them realized; a thousand beginnings,—none of them carried to completion; many, many promises,—but none of them kept.

Now it is too late. Too late! Is there a more bitter word? The time of grace, of meritorious work, of penitential satisfaction is past. *"Tempus non erit amplius. Consummatum est."* The die is cast, his fate is decided. "The work which you gave me to do"—the work of my own sanctification above all—woe is me!—"I have not consummated."

CXI. THE "EXINANIVIT" ON THE CROSS

"Exinanivit semetipsum." (Phil. ii, 7).

Whatever grand, noble, touching, and moving was performed on the altar of the Cross may be expressed in the one word which the Apostle of the Gentiles coined to express the Mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption: *"Exinanivit semetipsum*—He emptied himself."

It is the most complete sacrifice, the most unconditional surrender and self-renunciation which it is possible to conceive;—a *Suscipe* without the slightest reservation.

I. What Does the Lord Sacrifice as Son of Man?

All His *possessions,* even to the last garment, which is divided and disposed of under His very eyes. He is left not even a shred wherewith to cover His naked-

ness. Nothing, absolutely nothing, has the dour poverty of the Cross left Him.

His *body* with all its members bleeds, trembles, and throbs under the knife of sacrifice. His head, His temples, His lips, His arms, His hands, His feet, His shoulders, His back, His breast, His heart, all suffer, all burn with fever heat, bleed, and ache.

He sacrifices His *strength* in slow, painful exhaustion.

His *blood* is shed to the very last drop. The whole sacred vessel of sacrifice is broken and the last drop flows out.

He sacrifices His *comeliness. "Non est species ei neque decor."* (Is. liii, 2). *"Ego autem sum vermis et non homo."* (Ps. xxi, 7).

He sacrifices His *honor,* which lies battered on the ground, like a garment trampled into the mire.

He sacrifices *success,* in so far as it can be measured by human scales.

He sacrifices His *friends* and followers. All turned away from Him, except a small group, who remained faithful, but powerless to assuage His suffering.

He sacrifices *consolation* and the quiet joys of the soul.

He sacrifices His *life,* which ebbs away slowly, drop by drop. *"Animam meam pono pro ovibus meis."*

II. What Does the Lord Sacrifice as Son of God?

He renounces, in a certain true sense, the highest

rights and privileges which were His by virtue of the Hypostatic Union.

His *omnipotence.* To Him is given "all power in heaven and on earth." That He actually possessed divine omnipotence, He demonstrated even in His suffering. But He wills to suffer and to die, therefore forgoes all further display of His power, allows Himself to be fettered and dragged to His death, and hangs upon the Cross in such helplessness that His enemies cry out derisively: "Others he has helped, but Himself He cannot help!" *"Exinanivit semetipsum."*

He renounces His *wisdom,* which shone forth so gloriously during His public life. Now He allows Himself to be derided as a fool, allows the folly of the Cross to veil His wisdom as by a dark cloud. *"Exinanivit semetipsum."*

He renounces the radiance of His *holiness* and allows Himself to be punished by the most terrible death, that of a malefactor on the cross. *"Ut iniquus reputatus est."* (Mark xv, 28; cfr. Is. ii, 22).

He renounces His *majesty* and allows it to set, as it were, like the sun behind the clouds.

Thus He hangs upon the Cross as the most striking picture of complete self-renunciation. *"Exinanivit semetipsum."*

CXII. THE "EXINANIVIT" ON THE ALTAR

". . . In divino hoc sacrificio, quod in Missa peragitur, idem ille Christus continetur et incruente immolatur, qui in ara crucis semel se ipsum cruente

obtulit. . . ." (*Conc. Trid.,* Sess. xxii, c. 2; cf. Hebr. ix, 28).

Oh, how differently would the priest offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass if he were fully impressed with the fact that it is the bloody sacrifice of Golgotha repeated in an unbloody manner.

I. The Mass and the Last Supper

1. True, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is in the first place a repetition of the Last Supper. As Christ on that occasion transformed bread and wine into His Flesh and Blood, so does the priest in His name and commission on the altar. "This is my body, . . . this is my blood. Do this in commemoration of me."

2. But what Christ did at the Last Supper, He placed in an immediate relationship to the bloody sacrifice upon the Cross.

This is revealed (a) by *His words:* "This is my body, which is given for you. . . . This is . . . my blood, which shall be shed for you." (Luke xxii, 19 sq.; i Cor. xi, 24 sq.).

This is revealed (b) by the *manner of institution.* He converted bread and wine separately, the former into His Flesh, the latter into His Blood. And why? For the establishment of the Real Presence and the spiritual nourishment of souls,—which are the immediate objectives of the Holy Eucharist,—the single species of bread would have sufficed, since His words: "This is my Body," renders His whole Body present on the altar.

The separate conversion of bread and wine into the Flesh and Blood of Christ is intended to represent His bloody death on the Cross, which separated His Flesh and Blood. This indicates the sacrificial character of the Last Supper and of the Mass. "As often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come." (1 Cor. xi, 26).

II. The Mystery of the Sacrifice

But the Mass is not merely a memorial and a symbolic representation of the Sacrifice of the Cross, it is an actual *unbloody renewal* of the same, hence a true sacrifice.[1]

1. The notion of sacrifice, according to the belief of all nations, involves the *destruction of the sacrificial victim.* The sacrificial animal in the Old Testament was killed, burned, and destroyed, and thus withdrawn from earthly use and dedicated to God. Thus, too, is the Lamb of God slain upon the altar of the Cross, His body and its life destroyed, dedicated to the last drop of blood. Christ dies upon the Cross.

Hence if the Mass is not merely a symbol, but a renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross, the sacrificial victim must be slain and die, so far as this is possible. And this is what really occurs. Christ dies upon the altar, in so far as death means a renunciation of every outward sign of life.

[1] We here follow the opinion of a whole army of great theologians, such as Lugo, Platel, Antoine, the Wirceburgenses, Franzelin, *et al.*

True, actually (*realiter*) nothing is changed in Christ through this conversion, but the manner of His existence is changed. He exists under the sacramental species—

(a) First without that natural extension which His actual glorified body possesses. Hence all the functions of the bodily life necessarily cease. *"Desinit omnis actus connaturalis vitae corporalis."* (Franzelin).

(b) After the Consecration He exists in the form of food and drink, after the manner of lifeless objects. The Lord lies upon the altar as one who is dead, speechless, motionless, in complete helplessness, like a corpse.

True, no actual destruction of substance has taken place. Christ's essence and being remain, as we remarked before, wholly and entirely untouched. But the manner of His existence has actually changed, not only in appearance, but in reality. And this mystical death indicates an actual descent into the abyss of weakness, of helplessness, of humiliation,—an *exinanitio* that could not be imagined more abject. His death upon Golgotha was enacted in a wonderful manner, which deeply impressed the witnesses. But here upon the altar everything is of small proportions, humble, quiet, hidden, and altogether unimpressive to eye and ear. Everything is wholly and entirely submerged in the idea of sacrifice, and we have a complete surrender and abandonment of an altogether unique kind.

2. Finally, the sacrifice upon the altar shows itself as an unbloody renewal of the Passion also in that all the concomitant phenomena of the latter are repeated in the Mass. Here, too, the betrayer approaches; here,

too, mockers and scoffers play their part and sacrilegious brutality and half-heartedness are included in the drama. Here we also find the doubting, head-shaking multitude and a small group of holy women, the penitent thief, the converted centurion, the deeply moved spectators striking their breasts.

III. Priest and Sacrifice

It is of the greatest importance that the priest be thoroughly imbued with the sacrificial character of the Holy Mass. Then the humble appearances of bread and wine will not become a source of scandal to him;—they actually belong to the sacrifice. He will learn to understand what a complete surrender sacrifice demands, and that there is no depth so profound that the victim will not descend into it. *"Exinanivit semetipsum."*

CXII. THE MASTER'S DYING PRAYER

"And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (Luke xxiii, 46).

I. The Last Cry

It is a loud and solemn *"Ite missa est"* which is proclaimed from the high altar of the Cross to mark the finale of the Great Sacrifice. The cry travels out into the world and sinks into the hearts of men, stirring them to their deepest depths.

II. The Last Testimony

This powerful cry is the answer to the question: "Art thou the son of the living God?" "I am!" Jesus seals this decisive testimony in the most solemn moment of His death. He dies with the majestic profession of His divine sonship on His lips. "Father, into thy hands. . . ."

III. The Last Prayer

1. How noble is this death-prayer of Christ! It is the word with which millions of holy souls have since breathed their last. It has become the evening prayer of the Church and her priests, which in the Compline reverberates every evening throughout the world. *"In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum."*

2. This prayer is inclusive of everything that may strengthen and refresh a dying soul: faith, hope, and charity. *"Father,"* the sweet word of trusting confidence in this hour receives its fullest meaning: "I go to the Father."—"Into thy hands," into the hands of Omnipotence, which fashioned Me, into the hands of Wisdom, which ordered all things so admirably, into the hands of Love, which are prepared to receive the returning dove into the ark of salvation,—"I commend," full of confidence and hope, "my spirit,"—the immortal soul, which issued from Him and returns to Him, and which finds no rest until it is reunited with Him.

CXIV. THE CENTURION AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

(Mark xv, 39)

1. "Indeed this man was the Son of God." This is the expression of deepest conviction based on personal observation. The Lord once praised the ruler of Capharnaum: "Such faith I have not found in Israel." Again it is a soldier who merits His praise. Honestly and chivalrously He bears witness to the truth and thus plucks the firstfruits of grace and illumination from the Tree of the Cross, as it were.

2. The prophesy of the Saviour begins to be fulfilled. Instead of the children of the kingdom come the pagans "from the east and the west," who "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. viii, 11). Soon other noble soldiers will appear on the scene to repeat the parole: "Indeed this man was the Son of God." They behold the miraculous courage of the holy martyrs and confessors, their imperturbable calm in prison and on the rack, and they exclaim: "Truly, here is the power of God; only the truth strives and suffers thus." (*Acta Martyr.*).

3. Degradation and humiliation cannot erase the impression which moral greatness necessarily makes. The soldier especially is susceptible to this impression.

4. And now, O Priest of God, let me ask you: Has ever a non-Catholic been converted when you said Mass? Did your earnestness, devoutness, and dignity

at the altar ever move a non-Catholic to cry out: "Truly, here is something divine. This is the work of God?"

5. The ruler under the Cross represents Rome and its relation to Christianity. Imperial Rome opposed the Saviour already at the crib; for it was the Roman census which led the Child to Bethlehem. The Boy grew up under Roman rule, but it is only in His Passion that Jesus comes into personal contact with the Roman power. The Roman Portia acknowledges and believes in Him; Pilate suspects the divinity of the Master, even though political considerations restrain him from looking the truth squarely in the eye. The Roman soldiery exhibit to Him the rough and brutal aspect of the *praetorium*. But in the person of the Centurion the noble characteristics of the Roman nation are revealed.

Thus it remains in the following centuries. The Roman State and the "divine Cæsars" assume a hostile attitude toward Christianity, but the Roman soul is not closed to the overpowering impression which proceeds from the Heavenly King upon the Cross. The noblest treasure of which Rome can boast is presented to Him: its heroic virgins: Agnes, Ceilia, Flavia, and others, who cry out divinely inspired: "Indeed He is the Son of God." Matrons, strong in the faith, follow their example by giving up their lives for Him together with their children. Then there are such noble youths as Tharsicius and Pancratius, and, finally, such brave soldiers as Sebastian and Mauritius. It is these soldiers who carry the banner of Christianity over the

Roman military highways to the ends of the Empire. It is a Roman soldier who, inspired by the Crucified Saviour, adopts the Cross as his battle standard and leads the Church out of the darkness of the catacombs into the sunshine of freedom.

"Indeed this man was the Son of God."

CXV. THE DEATH OF JESUS

"Jesus, bowing his head, gave up the ghost." (John xix, 30).

I. The Departure of the Master

"I came forth from the Father, and come into the world; again I leave the world, and I go to the Father." (John xvi, 28).

The moment of Christ's departure has now arrived. But death does not come upon Him as upon a sinful child of Adam, in impotence and weakness, with a slowly dying rattle; it comes to the Son of God as a strong, self-willed act. "No man taketh it [*i.e.*, my life] away from me: but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again." (John x, 18).

He dies because He wills to die. His death is like the last flaming forth of the sinking sun, as the last illumination of the summit of a high mountain in the evening glow, slow, majestic, unique. And "Jesus bowed his head and gave up the ghost." It was three

o'clock in the afternoon, in the thirty-third year after Christ's birth, when this, the greatest and most important event in the history of the world, took place.

II. The Death of the Priest

O Priest of God, your last hour, too, will come. Your death will be no great historical event and will attract but little attention beyond the narrow circle in which you lived and worked. Nevertheless, for you this moment will be the most important and the most decisive of your whole life. When will you die? I know it not. But we do know that just as all streams have their source in hills and mountains, so all graces flow from the Cross, and this last and greatest grace of a holy death can come to us only from the Cross. Take your crucifix, therefore, kiss it reverently, and exclaim from the depths of your soul: "Jesus, I live for you; Jesus, I die for you; Jesus, I am yours in life and in death. Amen."

CXVI. THE DEATH OF CHRIST A PATTERN OF THE DEATH OF THE PRIEST

Though His suffering was intense, the death of the Divine Master was calm and peaceful. "Father, into thy hands . . ."

Do you fear death, O Priest of God? Behold, it lies within your power to make it calm and peaceful. You have but to learn the art of dying from your Divine Master.

1. If you desire a happy death, do *not cling to earthly possessions.* The love of earthly treasures makes death, which means complete separation from all earthly things, unutterably hard and bitter. The wretched priest who clings to his miserable treasures until death, must tear his heart from them, piece by piece. What a painful operation! Behold the Master freed Himself completely from all earthly things and gave away even His last garment. He has but one thought: *"Vado ad Patrem."*

2. Do you desire to have an easy death? Then you must cleanse your heart from all inordinate affections of love or hatred. This is difficult if it must be done on one's deathbed! Hence, for many a priest a long sickness is a real grace. It cleanses the heart, frees it, and prepares it for death. Behold the Master! His heart is free and disengaged, filled with but one thought: *"Vado ad Patrem."*

3. If you wish to have an easy death, then fulfill all your obligations in good time, pay your debts, meet all the demands of love and justice toward your parents, your friends, and your enemies, as the Divine Master did.

4. If you desire to have a happy death, then die while you pray and pray while you die. But this will be impossible in the hour of death unless the habit of prayer has been formed in life. If you have not accustomed yourself to prayer, instead of being concerned wholly with God, your soul will be troubled with the distractions of life in the hour of death. How frequently is this not the case! Only one thought should

engage you on your deathbed:—*"Vado ad Patrem."*

5. If you desire to die calmly and peacefully, then you must have a strong faith in God; hence keep away from you, at any price, whatever can disturb this child-like trust, so that when you are about to appear before the judgment seat of God, you can do so full of confidence. Only he who was faithful to the Father, as the Divine Master was, can exclaim confidently with Him in death: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

CXVII. THE TRIUMPH OF INNOCENCE

I. The Apparent Triumph of Malice

At the moment when Jesus bows His head and gives up the ghost, His enemies breathe more freely. They feared Him even upon the Cross; but now He is dead, unquestionably dead. A triumphant *Ah!* escapes their lips, and their eyes glow with the joy of satisfied revenge. Their victory appears complete and irrevocable.

II. The Triumph of Innocence

1. And yet, in spite of their loud and triumphant cries of victory, innocence is victorious. It has won a quiet and imperceptible, but for all that a certain and unmistakable victory, not only for the future, but also in the midst of the still raging battle.

Strange: while all are allied against Christ and every

means of violence and malice is employed to destroy Him, all declare His innocence, consciously or unconsciously, voluntarily or involuntarily. The false witnesses speak for Him, since they have nothing of value to testify against Him. Caiphas, unable to convict Him, is forced to appeal to Christ's own testimony. Judas admits that he had shed innocent blood. Pilate six times solemnly declares: "I find no fault in Him." Herod strengthens the finding of innocence. Pilate's wife warns him to have nothing to do with "this innocent man." The penitent thief attests in his dying moment: "He has done no evil." The Roman centurion loudly exclaims: "Indeed this man was the Son of God." The people, deeply moved at the sight of the phenomena upon Golgotha, contritely strike their breasts and beg for mercy. Even inanimate nature testifies in His favor: "He is the Son of God!" And the dead arise from their tombs to give testimony in His behalf.

His enemies would dishonor His mortal remains and rob Him of a decent burial. But behold, His body is buried in a splendid tomb by official command. Enraged, His enemies behold how the victory, which they thought they held within their grasp, slips from them and everything turns in favor of their hated victim. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." (John xii, 32). This prediction begins to fulfil itself in a marvellous fashion, and the enemies helplessly face this change in events. "O Nazarene, thou hast triumphed!"

2. And thus it has remained. A thousand times has

this triumph of innocence been repeated in the history of the Church and of her Saints. Not in vain does the Church, for the encouragement of her children, so frequently intone in her liturgy the glorious words from the Book of Wisdom: *"Tunc stabunt iusti in magna constantia adversus eos, qui se angustiaverunt et qui abstulerunt labores eorum. Videntes turbabuntur timore horribili et mirabuntur in subitatione insperatae salutis, dicentes intra se, paenitentiam agentes et prae angustia spiritus gementes: Hi sunt, quos habuimus aliquando in derisum, et in similitudinem improperii! Nos insensati vitam illarum aestimabamus insaniam et finem illorum sine honore: ecce, quomodo computati sunt inter filios Dei et inter sanctos sors illorum est!"* (Wisdom v, 1 sqq.).

XI. AFTER DEATH

CXVIII. THE BURIAL OF CHRIST

I. The Angel of Death on Golgotha

THE Angel of Death approached this holiest of all death-beds solemnly and reverently, almost reluctantly, for a commission such as this had never been given him before. In silent reverence he closes the sacred eyes of Jesus and impresses upon His noble brow the cold kiss. Silence, majestic silence now reigns on Golgotha. Invisible angels adore the mystery which has been consummated before their wondering eyes. Nature, as it were, reverently lowers the veil. Darkness surrounds the bier. At the foot of the departed Saviour stand a few of His faithful friends, weeping silently.

II. The Corpse of Jesus

Approach this bier reverently and view the mortal remains of the beloved Master. The pallor of death has spread over His noble countenance; His eyes have sunk deep into their sockets; the bloodless lips remain half open. The majesty of death rests upon His beautiful and undisfigured features. Everything which ordinarily makes death by crucifixion horrible: the public exposure, the nakedness, the blood, the open wounds, in this instance serves to throw into relief

the majesty of the Victim. It is the wonderful corpse of a priest, a white bloodless host, hanging between Heaven and earth. I fall upon my knees, O Jesus, and adore Thee. *"Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi, quia per sanctam crucem redemisti mundum."*

III. The Corpses of Martyrs

I peer into the future and behold the pallid countenances of numberless martyrs, who hang with broken limbs on the stake, so joyously transfigured that all are astonished. It is a reflection of the Sacred Countenance of their dead Saviour, whose image illumines their hearts in death, whose name they breathe forth in their dying moments. *"Decessit in osculo Domini,"* with this phrase the ancient Church characterized the death of a martyr.

IV. The Corpses of Priests

I see the corpses of innumerable priests lying upon the bier, clothed in their sacred vestments, their cold hands folded upon their breasts, their marble-like countenances sunk into the pillow, some beautiful and noble even in death, others hard and disfigured, like a dumb, pale question-mark.

CXIX. THE DEATH-WAIL OF NATURE

1. Until the sacrifice of the Cross is consummated, the Father raises not a finger in behalf of His only be-

gotten Son, and the unbelievers, in the certainty of triumph, cry out derisively: "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross." But scarcely has Jesus breathed His last, when remarkable cosmic phenomena testify to the fact that He possessed all power in Heaven and on earth. The earth trembles; the mountains quake and burst asunder;[1] graves are opened, and the dead come forth. It is as if nature were giving vent to her pent-up anger over the awful murder that has been committed. (Rom. viii, 22). The God of Israel comes to judge His people, as He once did from Mount Sinai. Thunder precedes Him, and the guilty murderers tremblingly strike their breast. —*"Commota est et contremuit terra et fundamenta eius; conturbata sunt, quoniam iratus est eis."* (Ps. xvii, 8; cfr. Heb. xii, 26).

2. It was, undoubtedly, to counteract the impression of utter impotence, which the death of Christ had left in the minds of His enemies, that these phenomena took place. For the Resurrection did not manifest itself thus exteriorly. It was primarily intended only for a small group of the faithful. The multitude had to be reached by other means. *"Tunc praecipue oportebat in Christo divinitatem se ostendere, quando in eo maxime apparebat infirmitas."* (St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, iii, qu. 44, art. 2).

3. God's voice of thunder is not yet silenced. Terri-

[1] Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catech.*, xiii, 19) saw the gaping crevice in the rock which is visible to this day as a mute memorial of the events that happened at the death of Christ.

fying phenomena accompanied or followed the execution of many of the martyrs, and after the commission of abominable crimes preternatural voices announced the nearness of an angry God and warned men to do penance.

4. There are also spiritual earthquakes, which may occur at the death of a priest and are apt to stir his conscience,—earthquakes, which as it were, uncover the dead, *i.e.,* long-forgotten and buried sins, and cause them to stalk forth like horrible night-mares before the dying priest.

CXX. THE CURTAIN OF THE TEMPLE

"And Jesus again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost, and behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom." (Matt. xxvii, 50 sq.).

1. It is the eve of the great Sabbath. The Temple is filled with a vast throng; all eyes are turned to the Holy of Holies, which was veiled by a precious woven curtain (cfr. Josephus, *De Bello Iud.,* v, 8, 4). Suddenly a mighty earthquake shakes the Temple to its foundations and the heavy curtain is rent in two from top to bottom. Cries of terror fill the Temple. Pale with fear, priests and people flee to the exits. They suspect, indeed, they understand the meaning of this terrible event. To tear one's garments was a sign of sorrow and indignation at a sacrilegious crime. And behold, Yahwe Himself, as it were, rends His garments as if shocked by the sacrilegious deed on Golgotha.

"Ita ergo nunc divinum templum quasi aegre ferens mortem Christi disrumpit vestem suam." (Theoph., *In Matth.*, xxvii).

This terrific rent is, so to speak, God's answer to the sacrilegious gesture of Caiphas at Christ's testimony in His own behalf. A cold shudder at least temporarily seizes the priests and scribes, who were but so recently intoxicated with their victory.

Thus may also be the terror of an evil priest, when suddenly, in death, the curtain of delusion is rent asunder which had veiled the innermost secrets of his soul.

2. The rent has laid open the Holy of Holies and the people see that it is empty. The old order disappears, a new sanctuary arises, and upon its altar will soon be celebrated the pure sacrifice of the New Testament, from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof. (Mal. i, 11). *"Umbram fugat veritas."*

CXXI. THE WOUNDED HEART OF THE SAVIOUR

1. Christ's Side is Pierced with a Lance

According to a cruel Roman custom, the corpses of those who had been crucified were left hanging upon the cross until they had slowly bled to death and were decomposed or had been consumed by buzzards or beasts of prey. The law of Moses (Deut. xxxi, 23), on the contrary, ordained that they be buried on the day of execution so that the land might not be defiled. The Romans respected this custom.

However, since death often set in rather slowly after crucifixion, it was customary to hasten it by crushing the limbs or piercing the side.

This desecration of the body of Jesus was undoubtedly a part of the plan of His enemies, but the plan of malice miscarried. The soldiers crushed the bones of the two thieves, but left the body of the Lord intact. This was undoubtedly due to the intervention of the Roman ruler, who had become a disciple of Christ at the foot of the Cross. He himself undertakes to make the necessary test, and he does so in what a soldier would consider an honorable manner, namely, by piercing the side of the Master with a lance. The spear, driven forcefully by an expert hand, penetrated deeply, and death inevitably followed. That the heart of Jesus was pierced, is evidenced by the water and blood that flowed from the wound.

We have here an example of the unostentatious operation of Divine Providence which ordains all things securely and quietly to their appointed end.

Now the prophesy is fulfilled: "You shall not break a bone of his body."

We have new and convincing evidence that Christ was actually dead. Hence His Resurrection must have been a great miracle. The piercing of His side will forever remain touching and an impressive incident of the Passion.

II. The Wound in Christ's Side

The wound in Christ's side has always been to the faithful the most sacred of all His wounds, which

speaks to the heart and the soul as none other can. It is a most touching sign which silently, yet effectively, as with blood-red lips, testifies to "the exceeding charity wherewith he loved us." (Eph. ii, 4). It is, in the deeply mystical language of the Church, the death-wound which the Divine Pelican inflicted upon Himself in order that He might be able to nourish His children with His own blood. What a touching model for the pastor of souls! This wound is like the rift in the rock which was opened by the staff of Moses and from which a stream of graces welled forth. "It is not written, 'He struck or wounded the side,' but, 'He opened it,' in order to indicate that the portals of life now swing wide open and through them flow the Sacraments of the Church, without which it is impossible to attain eternal life." (St. Augustine).

"Here [in the sacred wound of the Master's side] the holy mysteries have their source. Therefore, when (at the Holy Sacrifice) you approach the Sacred Chalice, imagine you are about to drink from the wound in Christ's side." (St. Chrysostom).

This wound is like the crevice in the rock, into which the persecuted dove flees for shelter. *"Longinus aperuit mihi latus Christi lancea, et ego intravi et ibi requiesco securus."* (St. Aug., *Contra Man.,* c. xxiii). But he who enters through this gate, enters a sanctuary, and this sanctuary is:

III. The Sacred Heart of Jesus

"Vulnerari voluit in ea potissimum parte corporis qua eius cor hominibus quasi patere posset intellegantque

sibi apertum ostium, per quod in cor Christi ingredi ibique possent requiescere." (Suarez).

1. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in union with the Sacred Wound of His side, is as old as the Church herself. In this form we meet with it in the writings of the Fathers.

Gradually then it grew and developed, as a bud develops into a flower, and became a separate devotion. "Having come to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we will not willingly be separated from it. How delightful it is to live within this Heart! In this Temple, in this Sanctuary, in this Arc of the New Covenant, I will adore and praise the Lord. Hear thou my petitions, O Jesus, and draw me entirely into Thy Heart." Thus the honey-tongued teacher summarizes the devotion which runs in most delicate tones through the writings of the medieval mystics. (Gertrude, Mechthild, Suso, Ludolfus, Landsberg, *et al.*).[1]

2. The later and present-day devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the result of a natural development. In its official ecclesiastical form, as an *expiatory* cult, it can be traced to the foot of the Cross. There Mary, John, and Magdalen stand contemplating the pierced Heart of the Saviour. Oh, how this Heart loved, and oh, how wretchedly was its love requited, scorned, and despised! How gladly would they atone for this neglect and irreverence by their love and veneration!

This is precisely the kernel of the Catholic devotion

[1] Cfr. the beautiful work of K. Richstätter, S. J., *Die Herz-Jesu-Verehrung des deutschen Mittelalters,* 2 vols., Paderborn, 1919.

to the Sacred Heart in its present form: love, expiatory love, to atone for the ingratitude and the coldness with which the Heart of the God-man has been treated by so many of His children.

What differentiates the present form of the devotion from the more ancient, is only this one feature:—that the pierced Heart is taken like a monstrance from the tabernacle and set up visibly for the veneration of all, and that the Heart of Jesus, His love and His Passion, are brought into intimate connection with the Eucharist, in which His love and Passion are continually renewed throughout the ages. "Behold this Heart, which hath loved men so dearly!"

3. It is a significant fact that the masses have taken to this devotion so eagerly and piously. *"Vox populi, vox Dei."* The cult of the Sacred Heart has become dear and holy to Catholics everywhere. Why? Because it speaks clearly and touchingly to the Christian heart in symbolic language. Everything about it is so palpable, so convincing: the Heart as the universal symbol of love; the wound which made this Heart bleed; the crown of thorns which so rudely surrounds this loving Heart; the flames which burst forth from it as from a furnace; the Cross which seems to rise from out its depths. All this every Christian can understand in its deep and touching signification.

The devotion to the Heart of Jesus comprises everything that the Saviour of the world was to all men in His life and Passion and desires to remain to them in the Holy Eucharist unto the end of time. "Behold this heart!"

CXXII. THE BODY IS TAKEN FROM THE CROSS

(Matt. xxvii, 57 sqq.; Mark xv, 43 sqq.;
Luke xxiii, 50 sqq.; John xix, 38)

Strangely enough, the enemies of Christ have lost all power over Him. His corpse was to have been dishonored by the breaking of the bones;—yet it remains untouched; it was to have been interred like that of a dog;—yet, behold, an elegant tomb is ready to receive it.

I. The Instruments of Providence

1. The two noble men who play the chief rôle in this part of the great drama, belong to the circle of Christ's silent admirers. Up to this time they had held aloof, "out of fear for the Jews," since an open declaration in His favor would have endangered their standing in the community.

2. *Joseph of Arimathea.* *"Vir bonus et iustus, qui non consenserat . . . qui et ipse discipulus."* He outmaneuvers the enemy by obtaining permission to bury the corpse. This permission had to be obtained from the Roman officials, since the crucifixion had been ordered by a Roman court and executed by Roman soldiers. But according to Roman law burial was denied to crucified criminals. *"Damnati sepultura prohibebatur."* (Tacitus, *Ann.* vi, 29; Suetonius, *Octav.*, xiii).

However, consideration was to be shown to the wishes of the dead man's relatives and friends. *"Corpora eorum, qui capite damnantur, cognatis eorum neganda non sunt."* (Ulpian, Dig., l. 48, t. 24).

No doubt Joseph based his request on this proviso of the law. The Governor's displeasure with the Sanhedrin and his high regard for the person of Our Lord made him doubly disposed to grant the request. With the Governor's permission in his hands, Joseph was able to frustrate the evil designs of Christ's enemies.

3. *Nicodemus.* While Joseph approached the officials and put his family tomb at the disposition of the friends of Jesus, Nicodemus assumed the task of providing a worthy burial. His noble generosity (a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes was an unusually large gift) enables us to gauge his love and veneration for the dead Master.

4. How easily are laymen who hold positions of power and influence because of their aloofness and hesitancy misjudged by the clergy. (We are not informed that Jesus chided Joseph and Nicodemus because of their attitude). The noble qualities of such persons are frequently displayed at critical junctures. *"Venit Ioseph ab Arimathaea et audacter introivi ad Pilatum. . . ."*

5. How advantageous it was then, and frequently is now, for the Church of God to have among its adherents men of culture, wealth, and high standing, who are willing to use their influence in her favor at the proper moment. Was not this the case in the German

"Kulturkampf," when the Church, like her Divine Master, was accounted a malefactor? (Mark xv, 28). Courageous laymen of every rank and station (*princeps Indaeorum, magister in Israel*), stood up manfully for the Church and her rights.

II. The Entombment of the Sacred Corpse

1. With loving solicitude and reverential awe the Sacred Body is taken from the Cross and placed in the tomb.

The piety of the Middle Ages loved to contemplate this scene. *"Vide quomodo ille decurio extractis clavis manus pedesque dissolvat. Vide quomodo felicissimis brachiis corpus complectitur ac suo adstringit pectori. Tunc potuit vir ille sanctissimus dicere: Fasciculus myrrhae dilectus meus mihi; inter ubera mea commorabitur! Cerne praeterea quam dulciter, quam diligenter beatissimus Nicodemus sacratissima membra eius tractat et digitis fovet unguentis."* (Saint Anselm).

It is a sacred liturgical drama which is enaetcd here, in which all the Master's friends intimately participate, and which is imbued with the solemnity of the occasion and their common love for Him. Would that this same spirit always inspired our acts of divine worship! The rule, *"Sancta sancte"* should inspire every word and transfigure every gesture.

One can readily imagine the look of gratitude which the Blessed Mother gave to these noble men, who pre-

served the Body of her Divine Son from desecration and who handled it so reverently. O Priest of God, do you not also wish to be regarded thus by Mary when you stand at the altar?

CXXIII. CHRIST IN THE ARMS OF HIS SORROWING MOTHER

"Ne vocetis me Noemi [i.e. pulchram]; sed vocate me Mara [i.e. amaram], quia amaritudine valde replevit me omnipotens." (Ruth i, 20).

I. How Mary Receives Her Son

Like a precious ripe fruit the Sacred Body is plucked from the Tree of the Cross and laid in the arms of His blessed Mother. Oh, now she again has Him whom her soul loves. But, O God, how have they disfigured Him!

She had presented Him to mankind as a sweet and beautiful infant; now she receives Him back as a bloody, mangled corpse. A sweet-smelling rose once blossomed forth from her, but behold, it is bereft of its odor and comeliness, and naught but thorns and the stem remain! Alas, how cruel is the work of sin!

II. What Christ's Wounds Relate to the Blessed Mother

Mary now applies herself to the task of cleansing the gaping wounds with the tender touch of a mother.

She begins her sorrowful yet sweet task with Christ's

sacred *head.* As the tears stream down her cheeks, all the old sweet recollections rise up within her. (*"Et mater eius conservabat omnia verba in corde suo."*)

The hair of the Lord. She arranges the hair which hangs in bloody knots about His temples and recalls Bethlehem and Nazareth, where she so often laid her loving hands upon that youthful head, combing the locks of her Boy according to the custom of the Nazarenes. How gracefully these locks used to encircle that royal head; how the wind played through them in the storm upon the sea; how frequently the fresh dew covered them as He arose at dawn from His mountain retreat, where He had spent the night in prayer. Alas, how unkempt and bloody his hair is now! She cleanses, smoothes, and arranges it lovingly, as though the old time had returned.

Then she washes the sacred *brow.* New recollections are awakened. How frequently had she beheld the pure brow of her Child and sought to penetrate the marvelous thoughts of wisdom which lay hidden there. She had seen His forehead covered with perspiration during arduous labor and noticed how the glaring sun gradually tanned it and how it developed lines of masculine strength and beauty. Alas, this brow, upon which the nobility of divinity sat enthroned, was now veiled and disfigured by a tangled mass of thorns! Lovingly and tenderly she removes the thorns, and as she withdraws them one by one, they pierce her own heart. Now the traces of devastation are removed, and she impresses a holy kiss upon His brow.

The *eyes,* too, tell a touching tale. Was not the

glow of these eyes in childhood the sun of her hidden life at Nazareth? And what a role these eyes played when later Jesus arose to teach! How lovingly they rested upon little children, how compassionately upon the sick! She had seen them flare up like lightning in holy anger. Then came the ever memorable hours upon Golgotha, when these eyes sought hers for the last time, before their vision was dimmed in death.

In viewing the sacred *mouth* of the Lord with its open, pallid lips, she recalls the blissful moment when she bore Him as an infant in her arms, and the little mouth opened as a rose-bud to utter for the first time the sweet word "Mother." Oh, the joy which this word caused to well up in her soul, the holy pleasure with which she pressed the Divine Child to her breast, almost unable to comprehend that she was privileged to call Him her own. And was not the clear voice of her Boy as sweetest music, to which she ever and again listened with enchantment? And later, when He arose to speak in public, how beautifully the words flowed from these lips, causing His hearers to cry out: "No man hath ever spoken thus!" Then came the Passion and the moment when for the last time she heard those dying lips utter the word "Mother." Now His mouth is stilled in death, and she beholds with unspeakable anguish the impress of suffering upon those pallid lips. Overcome with anguish and sorrow, she bows down and presses upon them a kiss filled with tenderest maternal love.

And now she raises one of the stiff and helpless arms and reverently takes His bloody hand into her own.

How cruelly the nail has pierced this holy hand, which in infancy has lovingly petted her, which was calloused with labor in Nazareth, later compassionately placed upon the leper, whose touch healed suffering and pain, which compassionately raised the fallen and dispensed innumerable graces. Who would not have kissed this sacred hand in loving gratitude and reverence, as John and Magdalen undoubtedly did? . . .

III. The Picture of the Descent in Catholic Life

1. Is it to be wondered that Christian art has seized upon this incident, that the greatest masters have applied themselves to it, and that Catholics particularly reverence and cherish this picture? None other appears so frequently in our places of pilgrimage, in our churches or in our homes; before no other do those pleading for divine help in need so readily kneel. Why should anyone wish to replace these representations by others? No other representation of Mary is equal to this; none other appeals so touchingly and yet consolingly to the Catholic heart, and from none other does such a strong sorrow-dispelling power go forth.

This picture constantly reminds us that the purest and most innocent soul had to suffer much. And *you* desire to be free from pain? It is God's dearly beloved Mother who suffers here; hence suffering is not only a punishment, but also a grace, a sign and token of special love and election and the surest pledge of eternal glory, provided we bear it as the Sorrowful Mother bore it.

2. This picture of the Sorrowing Mother has a special message for the *priest.* It teaches him to cherish and reverence the bloodless Host upon the altar as the image of the dead Saviour. Do you hear it, O Priest of God? Warningly and searchingly the Sorrowful Mother looks down upon the erring, sinful priest!

CXXIV. THE BURIAL OF CHRIST

And Joseph buying fine linen, and taking him down, wrapped him up in the fine linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewed out of a rock." (Mark xv, 46). "And the women that were come with Him from Galilee, following after, saw the sepulchre, and how his body was laid." (Luke xxiii, 55).

I. The Historical Burial

Christ's burial is surrounded by solicitous love and magnanimous generosity; nothing is left undone that might make His resting place a worthy one and glorify it as the prophets had foretold. *"Et erit sepulchrum eius gloriosum"* (Is. xi, 10).

A new and as yet unused tomb, belonging to an illustrious family, receives Him. Snow-white linen dipped in aromatic essences is wound about the body, a precious mixture of myrrh and aloes is poured over it, and a beautifully fashioned grave-cloth (*syndon*) used as a covering. The holy women generously give of their best. Nothing is too good or too costly for

the Divine Master. Love is whole-hearted and generous.

II. The Liturgical Burial

For the Church and her liturgy these events have a symbolical meaning.

1. *"Praefigurabant* [*Iosephus et Nicodemus*] *sacerdotes, qui corpus Iesus debent involvere,"* remarks Ludolfus of Saxony.

White linen should envelop also the Eucharistic Body of Christ. *"Ideo Sylvester Papa instituit, ut sacrificium altaris non in panno serico vel tincto vel auro texto, sed puro linteo terreno et sindone munda consecretur et celebretur."* (Ludolfus).

2. You pray daily at the Holy Sacrifice: "O Lord, I love the comeliness of Thy habitation where Thy majesty reigns" (*Lavabo*). Does this sentiment actually apply in your church, in your sacristy, on your altar, when you offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and when you conduct the burial services? Are all these ministrations characterized by love, reverence, a holy seriousness, and a magnanimous generosity? Or do you belong to those priests who degrade the holiest ceremonies and the most sublime functions by their carelessness and indifference? Are you one of those penurious pastors who regard every expenditure for church and tabernacle as too great and think anything is good enough for the all-holy God and the Eucharistic Saviour? Look at the sacristies and churches of such clerical misers? Soiled altar-cloths, corporals, and

purificators, torn albs, frayed stoles, threadbare cassocks, outworn chalices and patens, shamefully neglected tabernacles and altar wine of the poorest sort. These misers dare to use in the service of the All High God articles and materials which they would be ashamed to place before human beings.—*"Sacerdotes [Israel] contempserunt legem meam et polluerunt sanctuaria mea; inter sanctum et profanum non habuerunt distantiam, et inter pollutum et mundum non intellexerunt, et a sabbatis meis averterunt oculos suos, et coinquinabar in medio eorum."* (Ez. xxii, 26).

III. The Mystical Burial

The burial of Christ is mystically repeated daily in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, at Communion, which is, as it were, the entombment of the Sacred Body within us.

What Joseph and Nicodemus did, the priest should do in a spiritual manner. *"Signantur plena requisita in nobis, si Christus in corde nostro debeat sepeliri."* The priest should wrap the Body of Christ in immaculately white linen, that is, in a heart untainted by sin. He should anoint the Sacred Body with the spices of devotion and love and the myrrh of humble contrititon. He should lay the Body of Christ in a new grave, *i.e.,* a heart that has been purged of the old leaven and become a "new creature"; a grave hewn from the solid rock, which typifies the *stabilitas cordis* and the *soliditas fidei.* And the grave must be closed by a large and heavy stone, the *longanimitas perseve-*

rantiae, through a firm and strong resolution to keep out of the heart whatever might dishonor and desecrate the Sacred Body of Christ.

In this manner the piety of the Middle Ages sought to extract spiritual profit from every word of Sacred Scripture. The Holy Book was for the faithful Christians of that age a marvelous encyclopedia.

CONCLUDING MEDITATION

CXXV. THE CROSS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL REVELATION OF GOD

I. Of the Eternal God

UPON the Cross are revealed:

(a) God's *power* and *wisdom.* His power unites contradictories which would naturally exclude one another and accomplishes results through means which have no relation to them, nay, which stand in opposition and contradiction to the results achieved. The Cross appears as the most profound humiliation, the destruction of all plans, the end of all greatness and honor; but behold, what the Jews considered a scandal and the Gentiles folly, turns out to be "the power and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. i, 24). The Cross triumphs over the world and its imaginary greatness, its pride, and its sensuality. The despised Cross becomes the divine standard of victory which conquers the world. "But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong . . . and things that are not, that he might bring to naught things that are." (1 Cor. i, 27 sq.).

(b) The *love* of God, which far surpasses everything that human love recognizes as generosity and de-

votion. "For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God sent not His Son into the world, to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him." (John iii, 16 sq.). Or as St. Paul says: "God commendeth his charity towards us; because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us." (Rom. v, 8).

(c) God's *justice,* which demands full and complete reparation for all sins. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Hebr. ix, 22). Hence Christ must shed His blood vicariously for us. *"Et posuit Dominus in eo iniquitatem omnium nostrum."* (Is. liii, 6). We were redeemed with an exceedingly great price, namely, the Precious Blood of Christ. (1 Peter i, 18 sq.). In the evening glow of the Sacrifice upon Golgotha the punitive justice of God looms mightily.

II. Of the Incarnate God

(a) It is on the Cross that the *twofold nature of Christ* reveals itself in a most marvelous manner. He is a man and suffers and dies as only a man can; He is God, the true Son of God. This is nowhere so in evidence as upon the Cross, where everything seems calculated to engulf the divine majesty in a flood of shame, derision, and pain. But the rays of the divine sun victoriously pierce the dark storm-clouds. An indescribable manifestation of nobility and majesty surrounds

this Bloody Figure and transfigures it like as a radiance from another world. In the midst of suffering and in the agony of death Jesus remains complete master of the situation. He thinks of everything and neglects nothing. He utters words of unutterable love and goodness and dispenses crowns of eternal life. Everything He says and does on the Cross bears the stamp of divinity. True, He withholds His power, because He desires to sacrifice Himself and to die. But scarcely has He breathed His last, when all Nature bursts her bonds of silence and gives testimony of Him. The earth quakes, the mountains roar, the veil is rent asunder, the Roman centurion raises His hand in solemn profession, and the people, deeply moved, strike their breasts and exclaim: "Indeed this man is the Son of God."

"If I be raised upon the Cross I will draw all things to me!" A truly divine prophecy, which received its fulfilment upon Golgotha.

(b) Upon the Cross His love is revealed as never before. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John xv, 13). How quickly human love vanishes in the face of severe sacrifice. But the love of Christ shows itself in its true grandeur upon the Cross.—*"Aquae multae non potuerunt exstinguere caritatem, nec flumina obruent illam."* (Cant. viii, 7). As all the streams of the earth are unable to disturb the waters of the ocean, so the loving Heart of the Saviour remains calm and faithful to the bitter end. While He is derided and abandoned in suffering, He thinks only of others and is

solicitous for their salvation, their consolation, and their welfare. "And since He loved His own, He loved them to the very end." It is the highest triumph of love to continue to love on the Cross.

(c) On the Cross Jesus reveals in a most beautiful manner *His vocation and commission.* Here He shows Himself as the *Saviour of mankind,* who lays down His life for His fellowmen and thus consummates the great sacrifice of expiation which reunites God and man. Here, on the Cross, He opens the wells of the Blood of Salvation which shall flow onward in a never failing stream *in remissionem peccatorum.*

Here, on the Cross, He appears more effectively than anywhere else as the *Teacher of mankind.*

He teaches men by His *word.* He was a most extraordinary teacher upon the hillside and in the Temple; but his last sermon, delivered from the pulpit of the Cross, is by far the most striking and impressive of all. He teaches men by His example. As the flowers of the moderate zone develop to unusual size and beauty in the powerful rays of the tropical sun, so here, in the rays of suffering, Christ's virtues grow to overwhelming proportions. The sweet poverty of the manger becomes the heroic poverty of the Cross, the touching humility of the stable develops into the *stultitia crucis,* the *"erat subditus illis"* into "obedience unto death, the death of the Cross." All virtues: meekness and resignation, courage and patience, and above all love, assume heroic proportions.

No wonder that He, the Crucified Saviour, is the one to whom the Saints go to school to learn virtue.

Upon the Cross He officiates as *priest.* "Christ, being come an high priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hand, that is, not of this creation: neither by the blood of goats, or of calves, but by his own blood, entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebr. ix, 11 sq.).

On the Cross He shows Himself once more as the *Good Shepherd,* who, as it were, lacerates His hands in order to extricate and rescue the erring sheep (the penitent thief), to press him to His heart, and to carry him into His fold.

Here upon the Cross He reigns as *king.* Where is there a king so high and noble, so dearly beloved by untold millions, a king for whom innumerable subjects have willingly died, to whom the noblest representatives of humanity have dedicated themselves, as this King upon the exalted throne of the Cross, crowned with a ruby crown and in a purple garment of His own blood?

Here, too, He appears for the first time as *judge.* The Cross is the judgment seat, from which comes condemnation or acquittal, before which the separation of the good from the wicked, of the just from the unjust takes place. Upon the Cross of Golgotha we behold the beginnings of that which will be fulfilled some day in the future on a large scale, when "the sign of the Son of man" will appear in the heavens. Hence there stand at the foot of the Cross the representatives of all the nations of the then known world: Romans, Greeks, Jews, Asiatics, Europeans, Africans (cfr. Apoc. ii, 9–11), representatives of all professions

and classes: priests and scribes, military and civil officers, rich and poor, men and women, the aged and the young. The Cross becomes the slogan, the sign which separates and classifies men. (Matt. x, 35; Luke ii, 34). Therefore we have here the most striking contrasts: vice in all its forms,—pride and hatred of God, obduracy and coldness, mockery, human respect, etc.: and opposed to them virtue and holiness: the love of purity, the contrition of sinners, the courage of the faithful, the fear of the deeply moved, the faith of the newly converted, and so forth.

Thus the scene on Golgotha prefigures the future of the Church.

Finally, Christ reveals Himself upon the Cross as the *source of graces.* Like the great rivers of the earth, this divine stream of grace has its source on a mountain.

From the Cross gush forth the holy *Sacraments:* the purifying waters of Baptism, the expiatory Blood of the Holy Eucharist. Here the *"absolvo te"* receives its power of forgiving sins. Everything receives its consecration and efficacy from the redeeming act of the Saviour on the Cross, and hence all graces and blessings are dispensed by the Church in the Sign of the Cross.

Upon the tree of the Cross grow, like beautiful flowers, the various devotions which so enrich Catholic life. Here the sweet devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus had its beginning, here was born the devotion to the Five Wounds, which so powerfully appeals to the heart. Here is the birth-place of the devotion of the

Way of the Cross, which so many millions have trodden; here arose the popular devotion to the Sorrowful Mother.

Thus all that is beautiful, noble, consoling, enriching, and vivifying in Catholic faith and devotional life has its source and origin in the Cross: *"In cruce salus."*

The Cross is the shortest formula of Christian doctrine (*summula doctrinae*), whose kernel is the mystery of salvation. It is also the most succinct synopsis of the moral teaching of Christianity, which can be expressed in two words: *Sustine et abstine.*

No wonder, then, that in the true Church of Christ the Cross is found everywhere, in the churches, on the cemeteries, in cottages and palaces, in the homes, in the workshops, in schools, prisons, and hospitals. Surely it should not be missing on the confessional of the priest and pastor of souls, in the sacred tribunal of Penance, where more than anywhere else he dispenses consolation and strength in distress and finds light and the solution of all the problems that arise in the daily life of the priest.

IN CRUCE SALUS

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